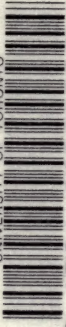
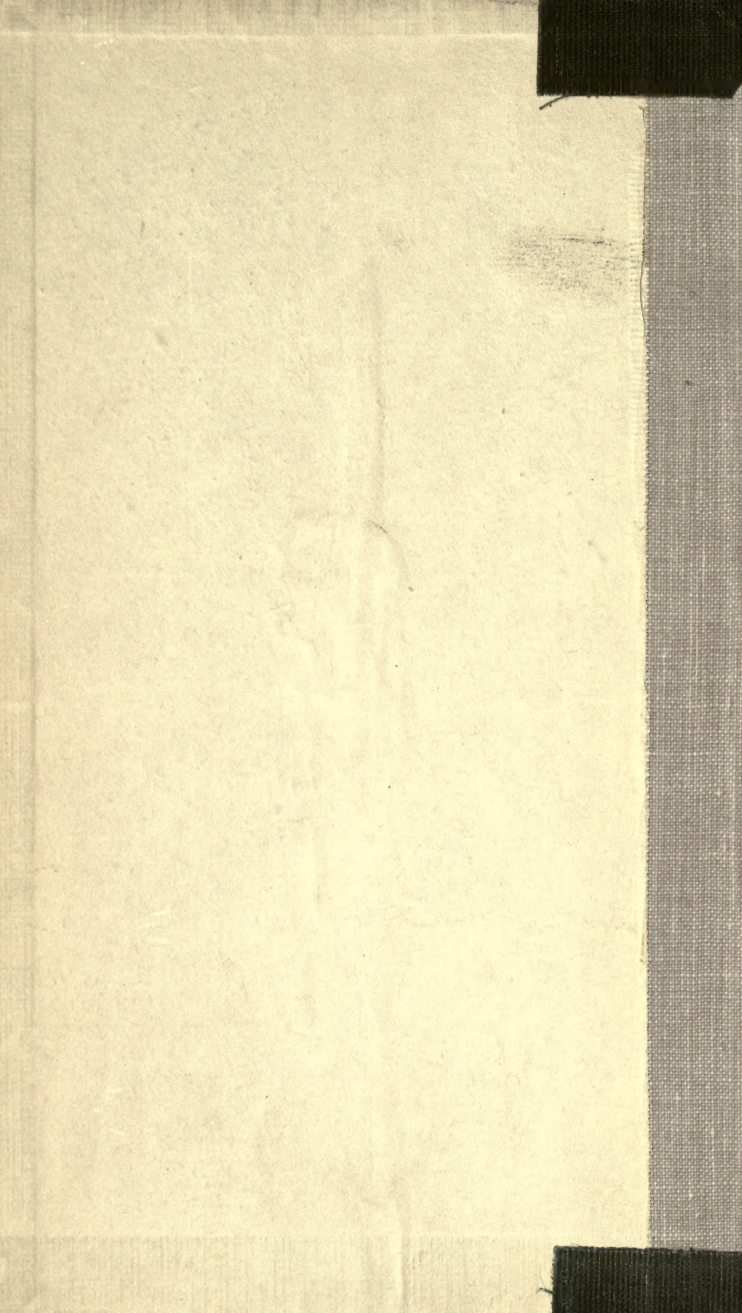


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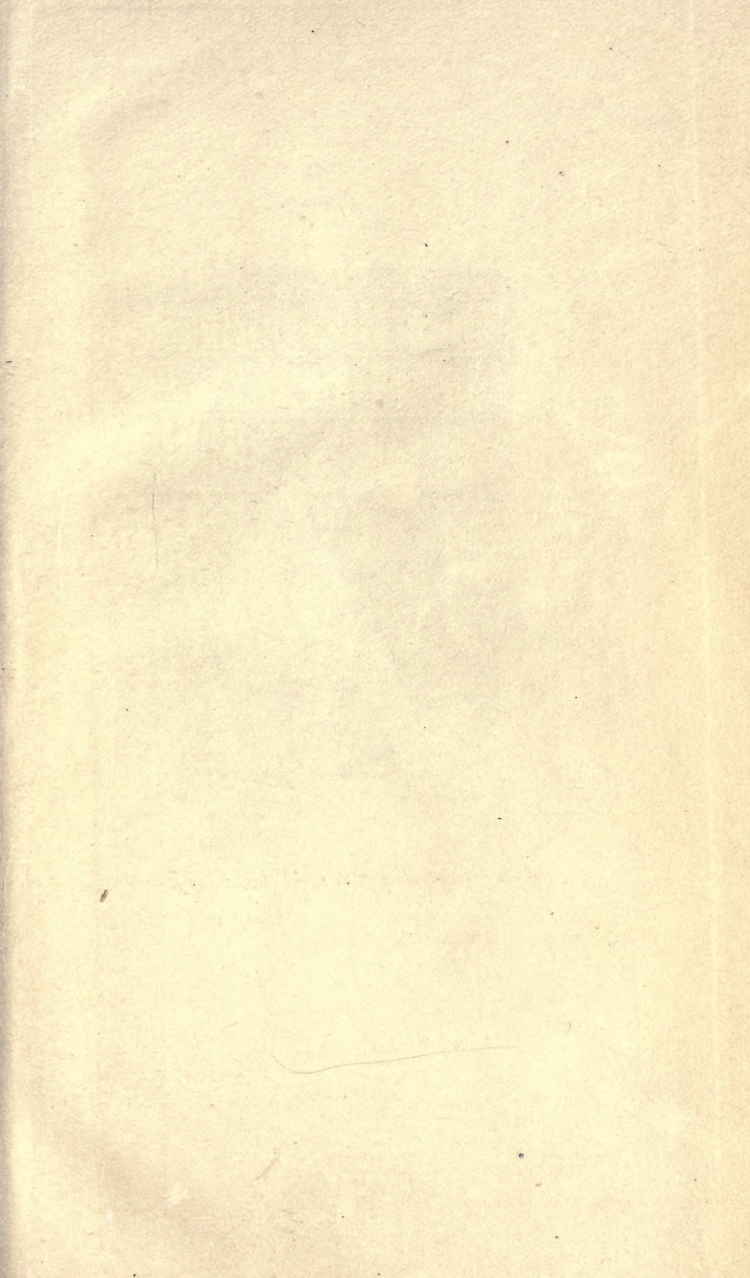


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After that they felt that they were friends
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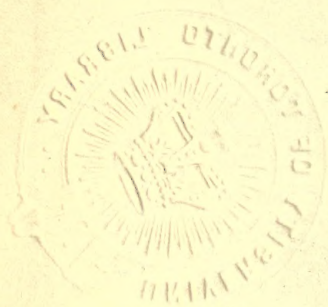
The
PROFESSOR'S LEGACY

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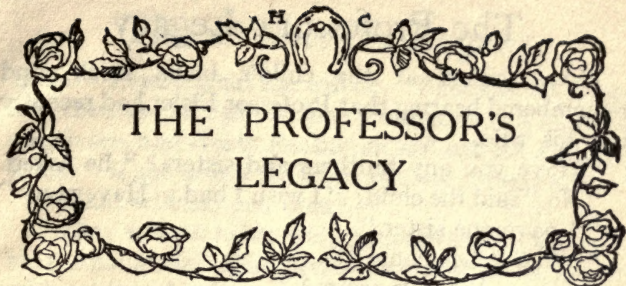


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THE PROFESSOR'S LEGACY

I

THE room in which Dacre had been asked to wait was evidently Professor Elsler's study. It was large, and from floor to ceiling the walls were lined with books. There was a writing-table near one of the narrow windows, and there were other tables heaped with pamphlets, microscopes, loose papers, and boxes, probably holding specimens. When he was first shown in Dacre thought the room was empty, but as he looked round he saw that a child sat in a corner by the porcelain stove, and that she had an open book in her hands and was staring at him over the top of it. She was a quaint little figure with two thick plaits of red hair, long greenish eyes, and a pale, clear skin. She was dressed in black, and before Dacre's sudden appearance she had evidently been crying.

"How do you do?" he said to her in German.

The child got up and came towards him, offering him her hand.

"How do you do?" she said in English.

"You speak English already?" said Dacre in surprise. "How old are you?"

"I am ten," said the child. "But my mother was English. She spoke German as you do, and she never spoke it to me."

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Dacre looked at the child's black frock, and remembered hearing that Professor Elsler had recently lost his wife.

"Have you any brothers and sisters?" he asked.

"No," said the child; "I wish I had. Have you?"

"I have one sister."

"What is her name?"

"Joan. What is yours?"

"Rosamund Antonia Margarethe. But I am only called Rosamund. How old is your sister?"

"Sixteen."

"Quite old," said the child, with a sigh. "Has she come to Fichtenstadt with you?"

"No; she is at home in England."

Dacre had sat down, and the child stood beside him, looking at his face, taking his measure. As she looked she came a little nearer. Then she put one hand on his knee. Then he put his arm round her, and they smiled at each other. After that they felt that they were friends. The young man had a strong, clean-shaven face, dark hair, and dark grey eyes. The glance of his eyes was steady and honest, and sometimes smiling. He was tall, and he had the tanned colour of a man who has lived out of doors a good deal.

"What were you reading when I came in?" he asked.

He was not in the least shy of the child, as many young men fresh from college would have been.

"I was not reading at all. This is an atlas, not a book, and I have to fill in a skeleton-map with the German States, and I've made Würtemberg and Elsass so big that there is no room in between for Baden. Last week when we did England I left out three counties because there was no room, and the geography mistress said it must absolutely not happen

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again. I know what she will do. First she will laugh, and then she will pin it upon the blackboard for every one to see, and Beate Rassmann will call me a donkey again. If she does I shall put out my tongue at her."

"What will happen then?"

"They will probably write and tell my father that I am the naughtiest child in the school," said Rosamund, with profound gloom. "They did so last term."

"What had you been up to?"

"It was in the drawing lesson, when we each have a piece of bread given us for rubbing out. Sophia Rassmann's piece was close to me, and . . . I ate it."

"That was naughty," said Dacre.

"Beate Rassmann is never naughty. She says her parents do not wish her to 'sociate with me. I shan't cry in school to-morrow. I shall say I couldn't bother to do it no better."

"But if I use a sharp knife and am careful, I could scratch out those boundary-lines," said Dacre, who had looked at the skeleton-map. "Then, if you are careful and use a fine pen, you would get it right."

The child's eyes were fixed on him in adoration, and she kept close at his side when he sat down at the writing table and began to erase the erring lines.

"Now then," he said, getting up when he had done, "try with pencil first, and while you are about it put in Lorraine and the Palatinate too."

For some minutes the child's red head bent over the paper while she anxiously copied the boundary-lines from the atlas in front of her. Then she suddenly scrambled to her feet.

"I hear my father's key in the latch," she said. "I may only be in here when he is out."

She was in such a hurry that, as she swept her atlas off the table, she swept the ink-pot off too. Dacre put

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out his hands to catch it, and was successful; but some ink was spilt, and a moment later when Professor Elsler entered his study, he stood still in surprise. His little girl, who had no business there, was offering her black apron to a strange young man whose fingers were dyed with ink. They were both laughing, but when Rosamund saw her father she sped out of the room by another door, leaving her ally to make his own excuses.

"There has been a little accident," he began. And then, all inky as he was, he told the Professor his name. Here, in Fichtenstadt, it was only the name of a young English student who had done well at Cambridge, and had come to the great German with credentials. He had brought a letter of personal introduction from a well-known English man of science, and this he had sent to Professor Elsler the day before.

"Do you speak German?" asked the Professor, who spoke excellent English.

He was a tall, impressive-looking man, with the hatchet profile of a Red Indian. His manner was dignified. He sat down in an easy-chair near his writing-table, and while he talked he formed his first impressions of the young Englishman. Both men grew interested, and though Dacre could not forget that his hands were ink-stained, he ceased to feel embarrassed by them. Professor Elsler was one of the most celebrated men in Europe, and this first interview with him made a landmark in Dacre's experience. He got up from it with a sense of elation.

"How long can you stay in Fichtenstadt?" inquired the Professor, who liked the promise of the young Englishman's face: the strong, rather prominent jaw and the steady eyes that kindled as the talk grew absorbing.

"I can stay as long as I please," said Dacre.

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"But what are your plans? I suppose you mean to go back and try for some post?"

"I think not," said Dacre. "I want to go in for research." He hesitated a moment, and then he added: "I have private means."

The Professor looked attentively at his new disciple. He had lived in England many years ago, had married an English wife, and knew the island people better than most Germans do. Dacre, he recognised, belonged to a class that has better brains than is generally supposed, but not the kind of brains that runs to scientific pursuits. It must have been a strong natural bent that had hitherto directed the young man, and now brought him to work at zoology in a little German town. The Professor saw tenacity of purpose in the young man's record.

"There is plenty to do here," he said, as he accompanied the new recruit to the door of his study. He did not go further than the threshold. Dacre was looking for his hat in the gloom of an unlighted passage when he felt a little tug at his elbow and saw Rosamund again.

"I have finished the map," she said.

"That's right," said he.

"Come into the dining-room and see it."

"Is there any one else there?"

"No."

He followed the child into an uncarpeted room, furnished with a narrow dining-table and bent-wood chairs. The stove had been neglected, and it was bitterly cold. He sat down to look at the map. Rosamund came close to his side, shivering as she did so.

"Have you been sitting here without a fire?" he asked.

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"I am not allowed to light it myself, and Luise is out," she explained.

Dacre looked round. It was one of the old-fashioned iron stoves that are quickly heated and quickly cold again. A great basket of logs stood near it.

"When will Luise be back?" he asked.

"I don't know. If I fetch you some paper and matches, will you light it? I'm freezing."

It seemed an odd thing to do in a strange house, and Dacre hesitated.

"Is there nowhere else where you can sit?" he asked.

The child shook her head, ran off, and came back with paper and matches, which she thrust into Dacre's hands.

"Do you know how to do it?" she said. "I can show you. . . ."

The next moment the two were down on their knees in front of the stove-door, and Dacre was making his hands blacker than ever by trying to rake aside the dead ash with a log of wood. The child insisted on helping him, and she looked at him solemnly when he had shut the door and they were waiting for the crackle of the flames.

"Your face is black," she said.

"So is yours," said he.

The fire began to roar, and Rosamund held up her finger for silence. They listened and smiled at each other.

"I don't know your name," she said suddenly.

"William Dacre," said he.

"I am sorry you have made your face black."

"It is rather unfortunate," he admitted.

"But the fire is burning very well."

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It was not only burning: it was roaring up the chimney with considerable noise, and as they had left a door open, it had been easy to approach them unobserved. Some slight sound, however, caused Dacre to look up, and as he did so he sprang to his feet. A young and very well-dressed woman was staring at them in amazement, and when Rosamund caught sight of her, and with a cry of "Aunt Betty!" ran towards her, she put out two gloved hands to ward off the child. For a moment the situation was ridiculous. The three people gazed at each other and did not speak, Dacre because he could not trust his German, and Betty, as she said later, because she could not trust her eyes. Rosamund broke the spell.

"How did you get in, Aunt Betty?" she asked, trying to hide her hands in her apron.

"I found the hall door open."

"So it was!" exclaimed Dacre in English. "I opened it when I was looking for my hat."

"This is Mr. Dacre from England," said the child to her aunt. "He came to see father, and he helped me with my map because I had no room for Baden, and Luise is out because her sister is ill, and I was freezing, and I think Mr. Dacre ought to wash his face and his hands. Shall I take him into the spare room?"

The lady replied with a little shrug of her shoulders and a glance at Dacre that disclaimed all responsibility for such goings on.

"You're not alone on the flat, are you?" she said to Rosamund.

"Father is in his study," whispered the child.

"I want to see him," said the lady, and without further ado she walked briskly up to a door in a corner of the room and opened it. From where he

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stood Dacre could see the book-lined study that he had quitted a quarter of an hour ago. "Good afternoon, Ulrich," said the lady.

And at the sound of her voice the Professor came forward. His manner did not express much pleasure, and when he caught sight of Dacre it expressed surprise.

"This gentleman has been lighting a fire for Rosamund," she said.

"Where is Luise?" said the Professor to his little girl.

"She is out," said Rosamund.

The Professor went towards the third door of the room.

"If you will come in here you will find soap and water," he said to Dacre.

"Who is he?" said Betty the moment her brother-in-law returned.

"A young Englishman."

"Why has he come to Fichtenstadt?"

"To work under me."

Betty looked at her celebrated brother-in-law, and her impertinent little face expressed amusement, but neither understanding nor respect. "Fancy coming all the way from England to see you!" her glance said as plainly as words could have done. Then she sat down on the sofa and shivered.

"He found the poor little thing in a room without a fire, I suppose," she said. "Why don't you let her run across to us when there is no one to look after her? Rosamund, would you like to come out with me this afternoon? We will go to a confectioner and have chocolate and meringues."

The child looked eagerly at her father for permission, but he did not give it. He pointed to the books and

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papers on the table, and told her rather sternly to take them into the study and go on with her preparation for next day's school.

"You are too strict with her," said Betty in the child's hearing. "What is the good of schooling to a girl? Rosamund is going to be as pretty as her mother, and when she grows up she may say twice two are five for all any man will care."

Instead of replying to his sister-in-law, the Professor bade Rosamund go quickly, and shut the door after her. As she did so Dacre reappeared, and with a word or two of humorous apology said good-bye again. He was going to pass Betty with a bow, when she detained him.

"Will you come and see me?" she said. "I am Frau Doctor Elsler, and I live in the adjoining flat. We always have music on Sunday evenings; but if you would rather come some other time I will ask Rosamund to meet you, and we will light fires."

"I should enjoy that," said Dacre; and then at last he got away.

"What a distinguished-looking young man!" said Betty when he was out of hearing.

The Professor gave a low grunt of disapproval, and reminded his sister-in-law that he was always busy at this hour of the afternoon.

"He has nice manners," continued Betty, quite unperturbed. "He was not a bit flurried when I found him stoking your stove, and as black as a sweep. Would you call his eyes blue or grey?"

"I will leave you to decide."

"I suppose he wants to learn German. I shall talk German to him."

"I wish you would leave him alone. He has come here to work."

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"Will you give Otto the pleasure of your company at supper to-night?" said Betty, changing the subject.

"No, thank you. I'm busy."

"I shall be out."

Professor Elsler hesitated. The young woman got up, put her hands in her muff, and laughed in the great man's face.

"I'll tell Otto you'll come," she said. "He has been alone three nights running. It is very dull for him."

"Then why don't you stay at home?"

"That would be very dull for me," she said.

II

THE daylight was beginning to fade already, and still Betty did not come. She had promised to fetch Rosamund at two o'clock and take her to the Christmas market. It was nearly four now, and ever since two Rosamund had waited in a fever of impatience. Twice she had been to the adjoining flat to ask if the Frau Doctor was back yet. She had tried to read, and found it impossible to fix her attention. She tried to get on with some embroidery, but now it was too dark to see well. She had taken off her thick winter coat, otherwise she was ready to start the moment her aunt appeared.

Rosamund was not anxious about her Christmas presents. They were ready long ago, all made by her own hands, and combining beauty and utility so successfully that she took them out of their wrappings at least twice a day to comfort herself with a sight of them. She had no tree to buy, either. She regretted

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that. She thought no one else's tree, however fine, could afford you the pleasure a little one of your own would. But ever since she could remember the family tree had been lighted in her Uncle Otto's flat, and she had gone there on Christmas Eve. Since her mother's death four and a half years ago all festivals had lost some of their old flavour. There was never any stir of preparation in her own home nowadays. Her father entertained no one except Mr. Dacre, who was always at work with him, and often stayed to meals to save time.

It was four years since Dacre had first come to Fichtenstadt, but Rosamund had not seen much of him, because she was always from home. Soon after her tenth birthday her father had sent her to the Dorotheenstift, a large, strictly-kept Evangelical school in the outskirts of Bertholdsruhe. At first she hated the monotony and the rigid discipline of the place, but in course of time she grew used to the life, and, from habit, fond of it. She felt strange at home now. Even the vacations had not brought her much to Fichtenstadt all these years. In the summer her father sent her to the country with friends, and at other times, except for a few days at Christmas, she had stayed at school. This Christmas she had begged to come home for the whole vacation, and Professor Eisler had consented. He found that she gave no trouble now. The four years at school had changed her remarkably. She was as good as a copy-book and as quiet as a nun. She wore the hideous school uniform without a murmur. She did not vex her father with demands or grievances. But there was still a spark of mischief in her eyes sometimes and a droll smile about the corners of her mouth that Dacre called up when he could. He thought it pitiful that a

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child of fourteen should be so drilled and so demure. Besides, she had a scared way with her, the way of a child who needs affection and tenderness, receives both in full at a mother's hands, then suddenly loses her mother and misses her for evermore.

At four o'clock Luise brought in coffee and lighted the lamp.

"The Frau Doctor has forgotten you," she said to Rosamund. "You had better take off your outdoor things."

"Not yet," said Rosamund, very unwilling to see the lamp lighted and the curtains drawn.

She was standing near a window and trying to see into the street below when her father came into the room with Dacre. At first they took no notice of her. They talked to each other, and Professor Elsler poured out coffee for himself and the younger man. But when there was a pause Dacre looked at the girl near the window, and asked her if she had been to the market and come back again. She had told him this morning that she was going.

"Aunt Betty has not called for me," she said in a voice that was flat and small with disappointment. She stood there huddled against the window, and though she saw the meal proceeding, she did not come forward.

"Don't you want any coffee?" said her father.

She came to the table then and helped herself. The Professor looked reflectively at her head, as if there was something about it he had not classified yet.

"Why do you wear your hat at a meal?" he asked after a time.

"I am going out with Aunt Betty," said Rosamund.

"Where are you going?"

"To the Christmas market."

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"The Frau Doctor promised to come at two," said Dacre.

The Professor listened in his judicial way without being moved either to sympathy or impatience. He did not understand Rosamund as well as he understood sea-anemones, and though he desired to do the best for her, and was not without fatherly affection, he had felt ever since his wife died that the key of communication between his child and him was wanting.

"Can't Luise take you to the market?" he asked.

"She is baking her Christmas cakes," said Rosamund.

"Well, you don't miss much," said the Professor.

Dacre saw the girl's eyes glisten with tears, but she said nothing.

"I hear some one at the door," said he; and as he spoke Rosamund sped from the room. But in another moment she came back again, more dejected than before.

"Who was it?" asked the Professor.

"A package of books for you. Luise wants me to take off my hat and help her chop almonds. She says it is too late for Aunt Betty to come now."

"Don't cry," said the Professor, not unkindly. "That won't mend matters. What can you want to do at that wretched market?"

"I want to buy a tree, and trim it, and light it, and invite little Johannes to see it, because this year he will have no *Weihnachtsfreude*."

"Who the . . . who is little Johannes?"

"Luise's nephew. His father is in the hospital, and they are very poor, so his mother cannot buy him a tree. I meant to spend the thaler Uncle Otto gave

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me for my birthday, and have the tree in the kitchen. It would not have been in your way, father."

The two men looked at each other.

"I can easily work two hours later to-night," said the younger one. And then he turned to Rosamund. "I have several Christmas presents to buy myself," he said. "We will go to the market together."

If he had been obliged to sit up all night in consequence, he would have thought it worth while when he saw her pleasure. Her jacket and gloves were on in a moment, and her whole face was smiling as she bid her father good-bye. The Professor took out his pocket-book and put a five-mark note in her hands.

"You can have a little tree of your own if you wish," he said.

The market-place was in front of the cathedral, and for about a fortnight before Christmas was filled with booths selling toys, cheap jewellery, cakes, and clothes. The peasants, who came with farm produce all the year round, had to crowd as best they could outside the booths, on the pavement, and on the steps of the minster. When Dacre and Rosamund got there it was late afternoon. Lights twinkled in the windows of the tall old houses, lights flared from every stall, and many of the peasants from adjacent valleys were still driving a brisk trade. The head-dresses and full skirts of the countrywomen made bits of brilliant colour in the crowd. The tall steeple of the minster stood out against the sky; the moon and the surrounding snow gave radiance. Rosamund, bewildered by the noise and the crush, clung to Dacre's arm as he steered her to the corner where there were trees for sale. The snow that had fallen in the night still lay on their branches, but in spite of the cold they

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scented the air. The girl looked longingly at the well-grown trees, but she pointed to one of the smallest and said she would buy it. Meanwhile Dacre fixed his choice on one of middle size, with a graceful, tapering top.

"That is nice," he said.

"But it will cost too much," she objected.

"I don't think so," said Dacre, and he bought it and paid for it. "For little Johannes," he said, as he put the girl's proffered money from him.

Then they went the round of the fair, and Rosamund spent her money on toys and candles and gingerbread figures and gilded nuts. But when she stopped in front of a stall covered with rather poisonous-looking sweets, Dacre shook his head.

"They might make little Johannes ill," he said. "We will go to a good confectioner in the Kaiser Strasse."

This was more easily said than done, for the crowd was dense, and to reach the outer fringe of it took time and patience. Dacre and Rosamund were jostled on every side, and found it difficult to keep together. People were not exactly badly behaved, but they mostly belonged to the classes who enjoy a rough-and-tumble. Rosamund slipped through more adroitly than Dacre, and she did not seem to mind the crush as much as he did. His love of his neighbours wavered when so many rubbed against him, and he was thankful when they reached the minster steps, where the throng was thinner. From here they looked at the *mêlée* beneath them, and as they did so some one tapped Rosamund on the shoulder. She turned and saw her aunt, accompanied by two young men.

"So you are here, after all," said Betty to her

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niece. "I was afraid you were crying your eyes out at home. How do you do, Mr. Dacre? You don't mean to say you have been down amongst that crowd. Should you have the courage to take me through it? I'm longing to go, but unless I hung on to the arm of some one as tall as you and as strong . . ."

Betty looked from the Englishman to her own rather undersized cavaliers and smiled at them provokingly. She was a dainty little figure, wrapped in furs, not bitten by the cold, not disturbed by the tryst she had failed to keep. Rosamund watched her with fascinated eyes, and listened breathlessly for Dacre's answer. What would happen to her if he was spirited from her side by her aunt?

"I should have been delighted," he said, "but I am taking charge of Rosamund."

"Rosamund!" cried Betty, as if the idea amused her. "Why, what is she doing here? such a small person in such a big crowd! We will send her and her parcels home in a cab, and Herr Wiedemann can accompany her if you think it necessary."

Herr Wiedemann did not look as if this programme delighted him, but he bowed and said he was always at the service of the Gnädige Frau.

"I expected you at two o'clock, Aunt Betty. Why didn't you come?" interpolated Rosamund.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Betty; "I suppose I forgot all about you."

"Come, Rosamund," said Dacre, "we have a great deal to do still. We must get to the Kaiser Strasse."

If Betty felt annoyed, she was too clever to show it.

"Will you come to my house on Christmas Eve?" she said to Dacre. "It is months since you have been

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to see me. We always have a tree for Rosamund, as she is the only child in the family—at least, my husband calls it Rosamund's tree. He trims it for himself in reality. I have bought nothing for it yet. He will be furious when I get home."

"I am going to England for Christmas," said Dacre, when he could put in a word.

"I suppose you will soon be back again?"

"In a fortnight."

"I thought Ulrich would not spare you long. If I were Rosamund I should be jealous. He spares her very comfortably year after year. She ought to have been a boy, of course. With a man like that girls are of no account. Poor little thing! he can't keep her at that beastly school for ever. What a sin to dress her as they do! I don't like being seen with her by daylight."

Betty addressed these remarks to Dacre in an audible undertone, and Rosamund listened to them. Her aunt had both hands in a big muff, and she looked up at Dacre with a gleam of mockery in her bright blue eyes.

"It is as light as day where we are standing," said Dacre, lifting his hat. And again he said: "Come, Rosamund."

For some time the girl walked silently beside him, brooding over what her aunt had said.

"I know my clothes are horrid," she suddenly broke out. "I wish I could have pretty ones like Aunt Betty's."

"I dare say you will when you grow up," said Dacre. "But clothes don't matter."

"Don't they?"

"Not a bit."

"Do you wear horrid clothes, then?"

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"N—o," said Dacre, laughing. "You see, I have a tailor in London who looks after me."

"I wish I could leave the Dorotheenstift and live at home. I wish you would ask my father to let me."

"My dear child," said Dacre, "I have no right to interfere in such a matter. Your father would not listen to me. You should ask him yourself."

She received this suggestion with a little sigh, and said nothing more; but she did not look happy again till they reached the Kaiser Strasse, where the lighted shops and crowded pavements diverted her ideas. Here they bought sweets and cakes to her heart's content, and some picture-books and a large Noah's ark. Dacre easily persuaded her that it was as much his right as hers to provide for little Johannes.

"Consider how often Luise opens the door to me," he reminded her.

"She says that you are like a son to my father," said Rosamund rather wistfully.

They had arrived at the windows of a jeweller's shop, and Dacre was looking at some small ladies' watches.

"I want to choose one for my sister," he said. "Will you help me?"

"Are you going to give her one for a Christmas present?"

"I think she would like it, don't you?"

They went in together, and the tray of watches was set before them.

"You choose the prettiest," said Dacre.

The girl hung over them, fascinated and uncertain. She inclined at first to a green one elaborately set with small diamonds. But Dacre demurred.

"I like these plainer ones better for a girl of her age," he said, pointing to another row.

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"They are more expensive," said the assistant, and he mentioned the price. Rosamund looked up when she heard it, but she did not see any sign of surprise or dismay on her companion's face.

"Have you made your choice?" he said, smiling at her.

She picked out another green one of a softer colour than the first, and set with seed pearls.

"Very well," said Dacre, and then he chose a second watch—a small plain gold one—and two long gold chains.

"Have you two sisters, then?" asked Rosamund.

"Yes," he said. He had paid for his purchases and asked the man to make separate parcels of them.

"But you have always told me you had one," said Rosamund, looking incredulous and mystified.

"I have only just discovered the other," said Dacre.

Rosamund held her breath. His glance told his meaning more plainly than his words, yet she felt afraid to interpret it. He watched the man make up the two little parcels, and when they were ready he put one in his pocket and one in Rosamund's hands.

"For you," he said, seeing that she could hardly believe it.

"Oh!" said Rosamund.

They were out of the shop and half-way down the street before she said anything more. Then she said that she had a mark left of her money, and that she would wish to buy Dacre a Christmas present with it.

"Would you like some roses?" she said, standing still in front of a flower-shop.

"Very much," said Dacre.

She ran in, and came out with a deep-red rose

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mounted with maiden-hair. Her face showed surprise and disillusion.

"I wanted to give you a thousand," she said mournfully.

III

ONE winter afternoon, four years later, Professor Elsler sat alone in his study. He had been told this morning by the greatest medical authority in Fichtenstadt that it behoved him to set his house in order. He had hardly a month to live!

Now he was sitting close to his stove and thinking things over. His work in life had been a success. He was one of the great men of Europe. From all parts of the world for many years past now young men had gathered round him to listen and learn. His great work on Corals was unfinished, but William Dacre, the disciple he loved and trusted, would carry it on. If Dacre had been his son the Professor could have died happy. But when he passed away his name and race would pass with him, for his only brother Otto had died two years ago and had left no children. To be sure, there was Rosamund; but who counts a girl when it comes to a question of work and name? Certainly not a man like Professor Elsler, who, ever since the death of his wife, had been something of a misogynist. Besides, he hardly knew Rosamund. He had packed her off to school at an early age, partly because a little girl did not fit into a widower's household, always more or less overrun by young men, partly because he wished to separate her from Betty. He had fixed on the Dorotheenstift,

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where the discipline was rigid, the uniform ugly, the food plain, and in this chilly establishment the girl had lived now for eight years. But on her last birthday the Professor, considering her age, had admitted that her school life must soon come to an end. He had written at the proper time to say so, and just before Christmas Rosamund arrived home "for good," as she said.

The Professor's memory went back to the moment of her arrival. Dacre had been sitting with him when she knocked and then at once came in. It was certainly impossible to imagine any one less like Betty, and the Professor looked at her with satisfaction. She still wore her school uniform—a woollen gown of shepherd's plaid, a long black cloak, and a mushroom hat with a weather-beaten bow of ribbon on it. Her hair was almost invisible in front, and plaited in a close, clumsy coil at the back. As she advanced towards her father she made him a quaint little curtsy and offered him a ceremonial kiss. She curtsied to Dacre too, and blushed with confusion when he got up, shook hands with her, and gave her his chair. No doubt she considered it her business to fetch chairs for her elders, men as well as women. When she had sat with them a few minutes, and had answered her father's formal questions about her journey and the health of the head-mistress, he had led her out of the room and commended her to the care of Luise. Then he returned to his study, satisfied that he had done all any one could reasonably expect of him.

For the next few days her presence at meals had been a recurrent surprise to him. Between times he forgot her. Then the upsetting festival of Christmas came, bringing its usual interference with work

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and its usual family reunion. Betty expected them to spend Christmas Eve with her, and she had made the Professor a present of a pair of braces embroidered with rosebuds. He had made her a present of a bracelet, and to his great annoyance she had thought it necessary to kiss him by way of thanks. Her onslaught made him cough, and when he recovered he saw that she was kissing Rosamund, and that Rosamund seemed to like it. Ever since the aunt and niece had been inseparable.

Until this morning the Professor had not known that his life was in immediate danger, though he had known for some time past that he was ill. After the first natural shock of distress and regret he gathered himself together and considered what he had to do. The fulfilment of his work was provided for. William Dacre would carry it on. His money affairs were in order; but his will had been made at Rosamund's birth, when his wife was still living, and to that he now desired to add a codicil. He had sent for Dacre and he had sent for his lawyer, for he knew that he must not play with time. At any moment he might go out like a candle in the wind.

It was eight years now since Dacre had first come to Fichtenstadt to work under Professor Elsler. A deep friendship had slowly arisen between the two men, growing at first out of the work they did together, and strengthened as time went on by the recognition in each other of those sterling qualities on which a personal friendship between men of their kind must ultimately rest. A year ago the Professor had asked the young Englishman to help him complete his lifelong work on Corals. They had spent the whole winter over one part of it, and were getting on. The only drawback to Dacre's satis-

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faction with this way of life was his fear that it could not last long. He had seen for some time that the Professor was seriously ill, and it was only through his urgent persuasion that the great specialist had been consulted. He felt anxious to know the result of the interview, and he started the moment he got the Professor's message asking him to come. When he reached the flat and saw his friend huddled near the stove it seemed to Dacre that the sick man had journeyed a long way towards the Valley of the Shadow since the day before. The shock of the morning had helped to wither him. His skin looked like parchment, and his hatched profile showed the waste of months.

"It is a bitter day," said Dacre, holding his own hands towards the stove and trying half unconsciously to account for the Professor's looks by a reference to the weather.

"I saw the Geheimrath this morning," said the Professor, who never beat about the bush. "He cannot help me. But I am glad you persuaded me to go to him."

"He cannot help you?"

"He gives me a month . . . at most. He will not promise as much as that. It is well I know, because I have things to arrange. These cases are curious. There is little pain and little warning. And then the end comes."

The older man saw that Dacre was profoundly moved. He ceased to speak because the sight of his friend's grief did more to unnerve him than the verdict itself had done. Both men were struggling not to show emotion, but Dacre's stillness and his stricken face spoke eloquently to one who knew him well.

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"I suppose the Geheimrath is the best opinion in Fichtenstadt?" he said at length.

"He is the best opinion in Germany . . . on such cases as mine," said the Professor.

"I wish you had gone to him six months ago," said the younger man, with bitter self-reproach. "I ought to have seen, when I arrived here in September, that you were altered . . . that you were ill."

"It would have made no difference," said the Professor tranquilly.

His long old-fashioned pipe with a china bowl lay within his reach, and he stretched out his hand for it. He felt the need of a sedative. But his hand was weak and unsteady, and as he lifted the pipe he dropped it. The bowl broke on the uncarpeted floor. Dacre picked up the pieces, and then went to the other end of the room, where there was a rack with pipes. He brought one back with him, filled it from the pouch on the table, and handed it to the Professor with a light. Then he sat down again and watched the puffs of smoke and the look of comfort and enjoyment that gradually stole over his old friend's face. His thoughts travelled to the book at which they had laboured together, and which he would now have to finish alone.

"It is a great mistake to marry late in life," said the Professor.

Dacre's ideas were suddenly diverted from the work that had been all in all to his friend. They turned at once to the daughter who had apparently been so little.

"Does Rosamund know that you are ill?" he asked.

"She knows nothing," said the Professor.

"Poor child!"

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"When I am dead she will have no one belonging to her except an uncle in England whom she has never seen."

"And her aunt here."

"I do not count on my sister-in-law for anything," said the Professor. "She is wrapt up in herself."

"She seems very fond of Rosamund."

"She takes fancies . . . and her fancies do not last. She has never had a permanent friendship with any one of her own sex. She is incapable of it."

In eight years Dacre had seen and heard enough of Betty to know that this was true. Her quarrels with women and her flirtations with men were notorious in the little town.

"Who is the English uncle?" he asked. "Is he married? Has he a home?"

"He is a doctor in London. His name is Charles Arden, and he is a widower. Since my wife died we have not corresponded. I know nothing of his present circumstances. My will was made at Rosamund's birth, and it appoints Charles Arden and my brother Otto as executors. When my brother died I ought to have appointed some one else in his place. But it is not the business matters that are on my mind—it is Rosamund. If I leave her to the care of any one here except Betty it is an open slight. For my brother's sake I would rather not do it."

"It is usual to appoint men as executors," said Dacre.

"No doubt. And you see what follows if I appoint any one in this town: he will look after the child's investments and leave the rest to Betty. That is the last thing I desire."

"What do you wish for Rosamund?"

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"I should like her to go to her uncle in England for a time. She ought to see something of her mother's country. I will write and find out if he can take her."

"If he is a widower there may be difficulties. How old a man is he?"

"He must be sixty. I have never seen much of him. We are strangers to each other. I cannot expect him to make sacrifices for a niece he does not know. But there is no one here either, now that my brother and Professor Rinke are dead. I hope her uncle will look after her."

"I suppose there will be a second guardian and trustee, though?"

"If you accept the position, there will be. Otherwise not."

"Me!" exclaimed Dacre, rather startled for a moment. "But I should be of so little use, as I am not married."

"It seems to me a very natural appointment," said the Professor. "Of course, it transfers Rosamund's affairs to England, but I have no objection to that. Your duties and responsibilities would be purely financial. Rosamund will have to live with her uncle, or with people chosen by him, till she marries. I hope she will not be long with Betty. In some ways I know you as if you were my son. You have been as a son to me. You are to carry on my work. I ask you to befriend my child too."

"I will do anything you wish," said Dacre. He made no verbal protestations of gratitude, but his quiet manner was expressive. He owed a great deal to the Professor, he clung to him with affection and regard, he was about to lose him. To accept service for him was a privilege and a consolation. "I will most gladly do it," he said again.

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"Rosamund will not be well off," said the Professor. "I have not saved much. But in this country two thousand pounds is considered a respectable dowry for a girl."

"I suppose so," said Dacre.

"As far as looks go . . . she fortunately resembles her mother, and not me."

Dacre took a cigar from his case and lighted it.

"Does she resemble her mother in nature too?" he asked. "I never think she is much like you."

"I know more of many of my students than I know of my only child," said the Professor rather sadly. "She seems tractable enough at present . . . too tractable, perhaps. She is dazzled and impressed by Betty. I wish they were not so much together."

"There really seems no one else for her here," said Dacre.

"How old is your sister?"

"She is twenty-four."

"Are you rich or poor? Well as I know you, I hardly know that. You have the reticence of your country in such matters."

"I have a good income," said Dacre.

"You never think of marriage?"

"I have thought more of my work."

"Marriage need not interfere with work."

"I have sometimes feared it must."

"A girl like Rosamund would be wax in your hands. You could train her as she should go."

"Are you proposing that I should marry Rosamund?" exclaimed Dacre.

"I don't propose it. I only want you to understand before I die that there is no one I trust as I do you."

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It would make me happy to give you my child to-morrow."

"But would it make Rosamund happy?"

"Bless me!" said the Professor testily. "If you give any one a kitten, do you consult the kitten? What is Rosamund more than a kitten, I should like to know . . . as compared with you?"

"Hush!" said Dacre.

IV

THE Professor turned hastily, and saw that Rosamund was standing in the doorway. Dacre felt sure that she had heard what her father said, but he hoped and believed that, though she had heard herself compared with a kitten, she had come a moment too late to hear herself offered like a kitten to him.

"Aunt Betty is here, and would be glad to see you," she said to her father.

"What does she want?" growled the Professor.

But if he had meant to deny himself, he was too late. Betty tripped in, bringing with her an artificial scent of violets and the swish of silk. Her brother-in-law, like most men, detested both, all the more because they were inseparable from Betty. She had never been able to cast a spell over him, and her manner to him was a little uneasy in consequence. She did not know how to deal with men she could not charm. Dacre had long ago come into this category, and as she passed him she shook hands coldly. When he had first come to Fichtenstadt she had tried to put him in her pocket, and had failed, not because he dis-

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liked her, but because he was too busy to accept her invitations. Since those early days they had rarely met.

"Are you better to-day, Ulrich?" she said to her brother-in-law, but she did not wait for an answer. "I want to speak to you about Rosamund," she went on at once. Then she paused and looked round, but her niece had left the room.

"Won't it wait?" said the Professor.

"You cut me short yesterday."

"You spent an hour here just as I had to prepare a lecture. At the end of the time I understood that Rosamund wanted a new hat."

"I suppose you wish your only child to look as if she had escaped from an orphan asylum when she walks about the streets of Fichtenstadt, where the very sparrows know her. I would lend her some clothes, but as she is three inches taller than I am, even my trained skirts . . . By the way, every one is going to wear trained skirts this summer, dust or no dust, so if you dislike them you had better go to some place where people don't follow the fashions."

"I think of doing so," said the Professor.

"Of course, if you are going to bury Rosamund again this summer her skirts won't matter."

"I am not going to bury Rosamund."

Betty glanced at her brother-in-law's grim profile.

"Where are you going?" she said.

"I wish I knew," said he.

"Wherever you go, Rosamund will want clothes."

"I suppose so," said the Professor absently.

"Shall I get what is necessary?"

"Certainly not. She has that already. But if it will give me peace and you pleasure to get what is unnecessary . . ."

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The Professor produced his pocket-book and took some paper money from it.

"You needn't give me money," said Betty. "I'll send you the bills."

"I will have no bills," said the Professor. "What you get for Rosamund you are to pay for at once. Here are two hundred marks; that must do."

"To turn her out presentably I want a thousand," said Betty, her eyes twinkling and her lips pouting as she put the money in her purse. "The poor girl hasn't a rag. By the way, you have not forgotten that she is to spend this evening with me?"

"I had forgotten it; but as she has spent every evening this week with you . . ."

"Poor child! what else should she do? You and Mr. Dacre are always locked up together. Do you want her to lie on the doormat and wait for you to come out?"

"I don't want her to be sillier than she can help in any way," said the Professor.

"I can't think where she gets her sweet, unselfish nature from. She came in quite early this morning to bring me her good wishes and some flowers she had bought with her own money."

Betty paused. The Professor resettled himself impatiently in his chair and said nothing. Dacre wished she would go. He could see that her presence acted like an irritant on his friend.

"One likes to be remembered," she resumed. "Family affection is such a precious thing. I would die for any one belonging to me."

"It is a great satisfaction to hear you say so," said the Professor; "but as Mr. Dacre and I are busy . . ."

"I agree with Christian Witt," said Betty, getting

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up: "the pursuit of science turns a man into an inhuman monster."

The Professor allowed a sigh of relief to escape him when he saw Betty make a move, and he tried to get up and attend her to the door, but Dacre intercepted him.

"I forgot to ask if you were better to-day, Ulrich," said Betty, her attention attracted by her brother-in-law's slow and feeble movements.

"You asked the moment you came in," said the Professor.

"But did you answer me?"

"You forgot to wait for the answer."

"Then we are quits," said Betty, "for you have forgotten that to-day is my birthday."

"I wish you many happy returns," said the Professor, looking anxiously at the door, which stood wide open, while Betty lingered on the threshold.

"All my friends remembered me except you."

"If you want me to apologise at any length, will you come in and shut the door?" said the Professor, who was shivering. "I have been warned against chills."

Betty made a little grimace, and addressed herself to Dacre, who stood close by.

"Are you going to the Freemasons' Ball to-night?" she asked.

"No," said Dacre.

She said nothing more, but nodded her head at both men and disappeared.

"I am almost reconciled to leaving this world when I reflect that I shall not be taking Betty with me," said the Professor. "I certainly should not like Rosamund to be left long in her charge. A girl of that age is very impressionable."

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Dacre did not pursue the subject. He saw that the Professor was anxious to proceed to affairs of business, for he had begun to sort some papers by his side. He had been to the British Consulate and to his lawyers that morning, and he explained to Dacre what was being done. There was house property that it might be well to sell for Rosamund's benefit. Otherwise, when the codicil to his will was drawn up and signed everything would be in good order. The lawyers had promised to get it ready and send it for signature this evening. The two men discussed questions of investment for some time, and then Dacre got up to go. He promised to return later in the day.

On his way out he went into the dining-room, where some of the Professor's books were kept, to get one that he wanted. He had expected to find the room empty, but Rosamund was there, and she had littered one end of the table with her sewing. As he opened the door she looked up, and then immediately looked down at her needle again. That was always the way she treated him of late. She would not speak to him if she could help it, and when he made friendly advances to her she retreated. He felt vexed about it, but he did not know what to do. As he watched her and thought of the grief and loneliness that menaced her such a little way along life's road, he desired more than ever to be her friend. But she seemed as shy as a bird and as anxious to edge away.

"You look busy," he said, going up to the table. "Are you making yourself a gown?"

"I am altering one of Aunt Betty's," said the girl without lifting her eyes.

She went on sewing with great speed, while Dacre went to the bookcase and found the volume he wanted. When he turned round again Rosamund had risen,

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and was putting her things into a big cardboard box.

"Have you finished?" he asked.

"For the present," she said.

The coldness of her manner perplexed him. Since he had taken her to the Christmas market four years ago he had hardly seen her till she came back from school last December. He spent most of his vacations in England. He thought she looked frail and sensitive and undeveloped. Her clothes, as Betty said, disfigured her. To-day she wore a dreadful maroon merino and a black bib apron, her hair was screwed back in a shapeless lump, and her hands were red and rough with cold. But Dacre paid less attention to these ugly details than to the uncommon beauty of her eyes, which had charmed him when she was a child. She was a child still, he decided, in spite of her eighteen years. He wondered what he had done to estrange her. He remembered what her father had been saying as she stood at the study door an hour ago, and he wished he knew how much she had heard. In spite of her forbidding air, he drew a chair from the table and sat down.

"Your aunt has been telling your father that you want some new clothes," he said, beginning a long way from the point.

"Aunt Betty is very kind to me," said Rosamund. "I think of telling my father that I would rather live with her than with him."

"Don't do that," said Dacre; "it would vex your father."

"My father often vexes me," said she.

If her purpose was to anger Dacre, she failed; but she startled him. He had thought her too gentle for the battle of life—too meek to hold her own.

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"It is often the way with us older folk," he said. "We mean well, but . . ."

"My father would never miss me," she interrupted, not liking his ironical tone. "He has you."

"I don't live with him. I am not his child."

"You take the place of his child. He listens for your step. When you come he sends me out of the room. He discusses me with you."

"He has hardly ever mentioned you to me until to-day."

"Because all these years I have been out of sight and out of mind. It is not right. Parents have a duty towards their children."

"I suppose they have, but somehow the sentiment doesn't sound pretty on your lips," said Dacre. "Was it at the Dorotheenstift that they taught you this modern version of the fifth commandment?"

He could have laughed at the flash of horrified denial in the girl's eyes, as for the first time that day she looked full at him. But by the time she spoke her profile was drolly complacent and severe again.

"Aunt Betty thinks very strongly on the subject," she said. "At the Dorotheenstift they were old-fashioned in their ideas . . . like you and my father."

She reminded Dacre of a child who is as naughty as it dares, and is half afraid of its own daring. But he was distressed to find that she resented his intimacy with her father. Of course, it was Betty's work, and he cast about for some way of undoing her mischief.

"I suppose I am old-fashioned," he said. "Your father is ill, as you know. I think you should be taking care of him, and not troubling about yourself at all."

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"Is he very ill?" said the girl, taking alarm at once.

"Not ill enough to go to bed," said Dacre, after a moment's deliberation. Without the Professor's permission he could not tell the girl the truth. "But he needs care."

"Oh, what can I do?" cried Rosamund, forgetting her own grievances at once.

Dacre looked at his watch.

"You can see to his comfort in little ways," he said. "He likes his coffee at four. It is five minutes to four now."

"Luise is out. She is always unpunctual lately. Aunt Betty says she is quite past her work."

"Perhaps she is, poor old soul," said Dacre. "But she has served your father and his father before him for fifty years. Can't you get some one to help her?"

All anger and sullenness had fled for the moment from Rosamund's face. She was clearing the table as fast as she could, and she looked at Dacre, as if his plea for the old servant convinced and touched her.

"We tried last summer," she said, "but it doesn't answer. Before they come Luise weeps and moans, and when they are there she leads them such a life that they run away. But she will let me help, and I love doing things in the house. Aunt Betty says that if I don't guard against it I shall be a regular barn-door hen, and that no sensible man will want to speak to me."

"What does your aunt want you to do, then?"

"Dress well and talk well. She says men are like birds, attracted by a voice and fine feathers."

"Surely not in this country of notable housewives."

"Aunt Betty says that most men will canonise a housewife and run after the woman who charms them,

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and that she would rather be run after than pine away on a pedestal."

Dacre's reply was inarticulate, but not inexpressive.

"I suppose you don't like Aunt Betty," said Rosamund. "You and my father always agree."

"I think she ought to know better than to talk such rubbish to you," said Dacre.

"Perhaps you think I ought to know better than to repeat it."

"I do."

"Very soon my father will think of me just as he does of Aunt Betty," said Rosamund, flushing uncomfortably at Dacre's curt reply. "I can see it coming. He has a poor opinion of women."

"He will have a high opinion of you . . . if you deserve it," said Dacre. "This room ought to be warmer. His doctor has told him to keep warm. Several times lately I have found the stoves neglected."

"They will never be neglected again," said Rosamund. "He shall find out that I am of more use than a kitten."

"I was afraid that you had heard that."

Dacre hesitated, and looked searchingly at Rosamund. She met his glance without embarrassment, but her eyes were alight with indignation.

"I opened the door just as he said it," she went on; "I could not help hearing."

"But you did not hear what went before," he ventured.

"No. What was it?"

"A business matter between your father and me."

"A business matter that led my father to call me a kitten compared with you! Can't you tell me more about it?"

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"No, I can't," said Dacre.

"I suppose you agree with my father?"

"Your father meant nothing unkind," said Dacre, getting up and preparing to go. "He meant that you were young and inexperienced. I suppose you will admit that?"

"I shall never forget it," said Rosamund. "Aunt Betty says that you have taken my place with my father, and this convinces me that she is right. You are his son; I am only a kitten. There is the situation in a nutshell."

"I am obliged to go now," said Dacre; "I have an appointment at half-past four. I suppose I shan't see you when I come back to-night."

"No," said Rosamund; "I shall be with Aunt Betty."

She watched him as he left the room, and then she went to the window and watched him cross the road. Then she relighted the stove, and afterwards went into the kitchen to make the coffee. Her father seemed glad to find it ready for him when he came into the dining-room a little later.

"You are getting useful and thoughtful," he said to Rosamund.

"It was Mr. Dacre who reminded me," said the girl.

V

WHEN Rosamund went across to her aunt's flat at five o'clock, she took with her the big cardboard box containing her aunt's gown. She wore the black silk that had been made for her confirmation two years ago. It was so badly cut that her figure looked wooden and angular in it; the skirt showed her

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ankles, the sleeves showed her wrists, and the bodice fastened down the front with jet buttons. It was a terrible gown for a pretty girl of eighteen to wear, but in spite of it Rosamund's face was aglow with pleasure and excitement. She was so childish still that her mood changed quickly, and when she rang her aunt's bell she had put from her mind her troubles of the afternoon. To her ignorant eyes her father looked much as usual while he drank his coffee. He turned over the leaves of a pamphlet as he sat at table, and looked up once when he wanted his cup refilled, and a second time to tell her to go to the florist across the way for some flowers for her aunt.

"Is she expecting any one except you to-night?" he asked.

"I don't think so," said Rosamund, with obvious embarrassment. "Of course, Herr Witt is often there."

Her father returned to his pamphlet without showing further curiosity, and his daughter breathed again. His question had touched on dangerous ground. Her aunt had given up her usual birthday party, and had arranged instead to go to the Freemasons' Ball, and to take her niece with her. "Don't say anything to your father about it," Betty had counselled; "I will manage it with him." When she came away from the Professor's study this afternoon she had vaguely told Rosamund that it was all right, but that she was to hold her tongue and dress at her aunt's flat. Ever since Rosamund had come back from school six weeks ago, Betty had taken her here and there in this half-surreptitious fashion, and the girl had learned to believe that her father did not mind where they went together as long as he was not troubled about it, and that the less she said of their

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pleasurings the more there would be of them. In this case the want of an evening dress had been a difficulty, but Betty had fished out a summer one that she said would do very well for the occasion, and had told Rosamund how to alter it.

"You will find it just the same story when you are married," she said to the girl. "If you ask your husband for what you want, you won't get it; if you take it, nine times out of ten he won't say much. Anyhow, you've had your fun."

"Are all men alike, then?" asked Rosamund.

"All husbands are."

"I may never marry."

"I shall see that you do. You have no one else to look after you in that way. I don't suppose it has ever entered your father's head to think of your future. He might just as well let you stay with me altogether. I suppose you have told Luise not to wait up for you? If we enjoy ourselves we shall be late."

It never occurred to Rosamund that there could be an "if" in the matter. How could she fail to enjoy a real grown-up ball, the first to which she had ever been admitted? The little drawbacks to her *début*, her lack of a gown, her lack, in fact, of everything to set off her looks, did not detract much from her pleasure. The pageant would be brilliant and delightful, and so by some miracle would be her part in it. The fairy godmother would not change Aunt Betty's old gown to golden raiment. Those days were gone by. But fairy princes still walked the earth, and beheld the daughters of men that they were fair, and it was the prerogative of a fairy prince to discover beauty, even when it went sadly in old clothes. Rosamund never doubted that she would dance a great deal. At school all the girls had looked

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forward to the time when they would go to balls, and none of them seemed to doubt that a ball was a triumphal progress, whether you were pretty or plain. As Rosamund waited at her aunt's door, her whole body felt alert with impatience and anticipation. Her words tumbled over each other as she thrust her box into the maid's hands, and explained that she would come back directly. Then she ran helter-skelter downstairs, and she ran so heedlessly that at the turn of the flight she nearly fell over a big burly man just coming up.

"Acht geben!" he said as he steadied her, "is the house on fire?"

It was Christian Witt, and it seemed to Rosamund that all the raptures of life were crowding themselves into one glorious hour. Whenever she met Christian Witt she walked on tiptoe for hours after, and now he had actually put his hand firmly on her arm while she regained her balance. A subject helped on his feet by a monarch could not feel more honoured.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" he asked her.

"To the flower-shop opposite," she said; "it is Aunt Betty's birthday, you know . . ."

"I didn't know," he interrupted.

"My father forgot about it, and he wishes to send her some flowers."

"I will come with you and get her some flowers too," said the great man; so Rosamund had the felicity of descending the last flight of steps beside him. He wore a long fur-lined coat, and he carried some fur gloves. Rosamund admired these things enormously. She had never seen him in the fur-lined coat before.

Christian Witt was the idol now occupying Betty's pedestal. The pedestal was always there, but the

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idols suffered change. Christian Witt seemed to stay, partly, no doubt, because Betty knew he would not care a rap if she deposed him. He occupied half the pedestals in Fichtenstadt now that Michaelis had gone to Dresden, and the position bored him. His business in life was music; but unfortunately he could not pursue it to his profit without meeting women who fell in love with him. He was rather inclined to fall in love himself, lightly and cheerfully and by no means for all time. He was a big fair-haired man, not corpulent yet, but inclined that way. In this country his figure would have saved him devotees, but in Fichtenstadt the favourite Hans Sachs was twice his girth, and, as an object of feminine devotion, his rival. His work was his pleasure; he enjoyed life, and he was quite sure that there was nothing better to be in the world than an eminent German musician. He played the piano well, and the violin passably, and he made a shift to sing. But he was at his best facing an orchestra. That was his instrument, and people foresaw that he might be called to the Opera House in Bertholdsruhe when the present man went.

He was not in love with Betty, but he liked going to her house. She was an Austrian by birth, and had something of the grace and gaiety of temperament commoner amongst her countrypeople than amongst Germans. She had pleasant rooms, good food and wine, and more patience than most women with chamber music. He could meet other men there and play quartets and trios hour after hour without a murmur from his hostess. She would even sit by and listen, and make enthusiastic remarks about any little minuet or scherzo that did not last long. Rosamund had made his acquaintance six

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weeks ago when she came back from school, and as she was at an impressionable age she joined the majority, and fell in love with him. It was a very serious affair. She had bought his photograph, and often looked at it secretly, and the desire of her heart was to be his pupil. She had not dared to tell her aunt so, because she could not trust herself to speak of Christian Witt without blushing, and she was shrewd enough to guess that any symptoms of the kind would irritate Betty. She had not asked her father for music lessons, because she was not in the habit of asking him for anything she wanted. Eight years had estranged her from him, and no one had said a word to mend matters until Dacre spoke this afternoon. But she was not thinking of her father as she crossed the road in the dark of the winter afternoon with Christian Witt. She wished she could have spun out the proud moment when they entered the shop together and he asked for flowers. The young woman at the counter was all eagerness to serve him. The Grand Duke, who lived mostly at Bertholdsruhe, was not as well known in Fichtenstadt as Christian Witt. She knew Rosamund too, and greeted her with more respect than usual, as was only natural. She brought forward her most beautiful flowers, and Christian turned to Rosamund and asked her which he had better choose.

“Does your aunt like roses or camellias?” he asked. “Or perhaps one of these baskets with hyacinths and tulips?”

“I am sure she would like that,” said Rosamund, and Christian at once decided on it.

“What shall I take?” she asked, consulting him in her turn; and he helped her to choose some lilies of the valley and roses mounted together. He saw that

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she had not brought much to spend, because she held the thaler her father had given her in her hand.

Betty looked surprised when her niece entered the room with Christian Witt, and when she heard that they had been at the flower-shop together, she said, "How amusing!" but a moment later she sent Rosamund out of the room to put the roses and lilies in water, and her glance followed her niece derisively.

"My brother-in-law is reaping what he sowed," she said. "He has always neglected the girl, and now he is sorry that she has neither looks nor manners. He leaves her to me; but what can I do with such a figure and such awkward ways? Did you ever see such clothes?"

"I don't see much wrong with the child, except that she is young for her age," said Christian bluntly. "She will learn to dress up and use her eyes soon enough, I dare say. Is it true that her father is very ill?"

"He always looked like a mummy and behaved like a bear," said Betty. "I don't know that he is worse than usual."

"Who would look after his daughter if he died?"

"There is no one but me. So I hope he won't die just yet. I don't know that I want the girl more on my hands than she is already."

The door opened as Betty finished speaking, and Rosamund appeared again.

"The room is full of flowers now," she said. "Which of them will you wear to-night, Aunt Betty?"

"Where are you going to-night?" asked Christian.

"I have two tickets for the Freemasons' Ball," said Betty. "I have not made up my mind to use them."

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Rosamund stared at her aunt as if she could not believe her ears.

"But we have talked of it for days!" she cried. "My dress is ready on the spare-room bed. Mr. Dacre found me busy with it. Luckily, he asked no inconvenient questions."

"Who is Mr. Dacre?" asked Christian.

"An Englishman," said Betty.

"He has worked with my father for years," explained Rosamund. "They are always together."

"Rosamund may go hang for all her father cares as long as he has his Englishman," said Betty. "It is an infatuation. So my niece and I are driven into each other's arms."

She yawned slightly as she spoke, and settled herself amongst her cushions. She somehow conveyed the impression that if she put her arms round her niece it was not done with any great ardour.

"Of course, my brother-in-law has no idea that she may be going to the ball to-night," she added; "we don't tell him everything—do we, Rosamund?"

Christian looked what he felt, surprised and disapproving.

"But you will both be recognised," he said. "Probably the Professor will hear of it."

"Then he will storm at me," said Betty, "and next time I shall do it again, if I'm so inclined. I never did mind a little sound and fury."

"Do you like dancing?" said Christian, turning suddenly to Rosamund and meeting the full gaze of her lovely, fascinated eyes.

"How can she possibly know?" said Betty; "she has never been to a dance in her life."

"But we danced every Saturday at school," said Rosamund.

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The two older people laughed.

"Shall you be there to-night?" said Betty.

"Yes, I shall be there. I am a Freemason."

"What have you done about shoes?" she said suddenly to her niece. "Have you bought yourself white ones?"

"N—o," replied Rosamund; "you said the other day that my new black ones . . ."

"Run!" cried Betty, clapping her hands together impatiently—"run and find Bertha! Tell her to give you all my white shoes. See if one pair will fit you. What a muddle-headed child you are! Of course, I meant the black shoes would do if you wore a black gown."

Rosamund went unwillingly out of the room. She would rather have stayed near Christian Witt. Betty twinkled gleefully as her niece disappeared.

"A raw creature like that never sees when she is in the way," she said. "My old shoes are put away in the attic. It will take Bertha a quarter of an hour to find them. Then they won't fit. Rosamund's foot is longer than mine."

"What will she do for shoes, then?"

"Wear her own. It doesn't matter what she wears. No one knows her yet. I take her because it is not amusing to go alone, and because any occasion of the kind will help to rub off her corners."

"A child of her age ought only to appear at private houses. Why don't you leave her at home?"

"Now? She would cry her eyes out."

"It is better that she should do that than make her *début* at a Freemasons' Ball. Professor Elsler's daughter has no business there."

"I don't agree with you. Where I appear she can."

"You would be better at home, too."

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"Why do you go?"

"To amuse myself."

"How odd! That is why I go too. My husband never would allow it. He wanted me to live in a glass case. I dare say it keeps the dust off, but it is vastly dull inside. I am so constructed that I would rather be dusty than dull."

Christian Witt laughed as he got up to go.

"The glass case was never made that would hold you," he said. "But you can take care of yourself uncommonly well. Your niece is a child, and the company to-night will be a rabble."

"But a respectable rabble," amended Betty.

"None of the shoes fit," said Rosamund, coming back into the room with a look of dismay.

"I am trying to persuade your aunt to leave you at home," said Christian Witt.

"I am not going to take his advice," said Betty, "so you needn't stare at Herr Witt as if you wished him to observe that your eyes were as big as tea-saucers."

Christian gave a little grunt of disapproval again, and Rosamund turned shamefacedly away.

"If the Professor had a grain of sense, he would keep his girl out of this," he thought to himself; but as he shook hands with Betty he only said, "Auf Wiedersehen to-night, then."

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VI

“ You will have to wear your own shoes,” said Betty, when Christian Witt had gone; “ there will be such a crowd that no one will see your feet. Your father only gave me two hundred marks for your clothes this morning, and said it must last a long while. It won't go far.”

“ What does he mean by a long while?” asked Rosamund. “ How much a year will he give me for my clothes?”

“ He didn't say. Some men never will. They tell their women-folk to get what they want, and then make a to-do about every bill.”

“ How much do you spend on clothes, Aunt Betty?”

“ I haven't a notion,” said Betty. “ When Otto was alive I took his advice and got what I wanted; but, then, I never minded how much he fussed about bills. I'm not easily ruffled. Now I have my income in my own hands, and it has to buy clothes first and everything else next, in a sensible way. I suppose I spend a good deal. I'm more conspicuous here than I should be in London or Paris, and it is very pleasant to feel that, compared with me, all the other women are frumps. But don't go about asking other women that kind of intimate personal question. They'll ask you where you were brought up.”

“ I think I'll go and dress now,” said Rosamund, when she had reflected on her aunt's advice; “ then, if there is anything wrong with that skirt, there will be time to alter it.”

But as she left the room she remembered that she had forgotten to bring away her lace handkerchief,

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which had been a Christmas present and which she greatly admired. She had the key of her flat, let herself in, found the handkerchief, and would have gone straight away again if she had not been called by her father as she passed the door of his study. She felt unwilling and impatient, but she was obliged to go at his call.

"I thought you were spending the evening with your aunt?" said the Professor.

"I am. I just came to fetch something I wanted."

"Shut the door and come here."

Rosamund grudged every moment, but she could not venture to say so. Besides, as she approached her father and saw his face in the lamplight, its unusual pallor struck her, though she was still as ignorant and nearly as unsympathetic as a child.

"Are you ill?" she said timidly.

"Yes, I am ill."

"Shall I send for Dr. Weisse?"

"No, thank you," said the Professor. He was looking at his daughter with new ideas and anxieties in his mind. He felt full of concern for her future, and of regret for the desolate position in which his death would soon leave her. He saw that she was unripe for it.

"I have just been writing to England to your Uncle Charles," he said; "he is the only near relative you have in the world."

"I have you and Aunt Betty," said Rosamund.

"You will not always have me. As for your Aunt Betty . . ."

"We are devoted to each other."

"I don't approve of the intimacy. However, it won't last."

"What will end it?" cried Rosamund in alarm.

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"Betty herself. She is incapable of loyalty to a woman. When she gets tired of you she will break with you."

The girl's face fell. Her father's words cast a shadow on her spirit.

"If that were to happen I should have no one," she said. "Of course I have you," she added politely, "but I can't talk to you about clothes and things. You are too busy."

"I wish you would make a friend of Mr. Dacre. You will find that life is not all clothes. At least, I hope you are not going to be one of the fool-women who make it so. And he is a man to trust."

"I did like him when I was a child," said Rosamund. "I liked him a little again this afternoon, but only a little. Have you noticed that I never wear the watch and chain he gave me?"

The Professor said he had not noticed it. He asked if they were out of repair.

"They are as good as new," said Rosamund. "At school we were not allowed to wear such things. But Aunt Betty says it shows a want of delicacy to wear a gift when you dislike the giver. She advised me to return them. I thought of it this afternoon, but I did not know how to begin. It is a difficult matter to explain."

"I forbid you to do anything so stupid and ungracious," said the Professor. "When you were a child you were wrapped up in Mr. Dacre. He has not altered since."

"But I have," said Rosamund. "I am grown up now, and my tastes are formed. Aunt Betty and I find him unsympathetic."

"The people your aunt gathers round her are not fit to black his boots," said the Professor.

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"But do you know them? Do you know Herr Christian Witt, for instance?"

"He is the best of the lot. He sticks to his work."

"He is the finest musician in Fichtenstadt," said Rosamund, indignant at this faint praise. "You should have read what the *Tageblatt* said about him last week. It does not say such things of Mr. Dacre."

Professor Elsler looked at his child without anger or surprise.

"You can't help being young and ignorant," he said. "I suppose a girl fresh from school can't help being silly. But don't go out of your way to be silly. It is well for a young woman to hold her tongue sometimes, rather than speak of matters she does not understand."

"I know you think me a kitten compared with Mr. Dacre," complained Rosamund; "I heard you say so this afternoon."

"Don't forget it, then," said the Professor, with a flash of mirth in his eyes. "Remember it whenever you are with him, and pay him the respect he deserves."

Rosamund tried to look indignant, but in reality her father's reply cleared the air. What he said behind her back he said more forcibly to her face, and she no longer nursed a sense of injury.

"I wish he would go back to England," she said. "How much longer will he live here, and be with you from morning till night?"

"Not much longer," said the Professor; and his manner was so sad that, without knowing why, Rosamund crept nearer to him.

"I wish you would let me have a keybasket and keep house," she begged; "then I should be of more use than a kitten. Luise is getting too old, and I am

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quite old enough. I was eighteen in January. Beate Rassmann was married at my age."

"Would you like to be married?"

"I should like a white satin dress with a long train and a house of my own. I might have a white satin dress for a ball. Girls do now. I would much rather keep house for you than for a strange man. But I do want to keep house. Beate says it is heavenly fun to have a store cupboard and a linen cupboard, and to go to market. She gets up quite early, and buys her own vegetables. Her friends let their cooks do it, but she says none of them are as *tüchtig* as she is." *C. G. 100 112*

"Is Beate happy?" asked the Professor, who knew and did not like the man Beate had married.

"Yes," said Rosamund; "I don't think she cares for her husband much, but she says you can't expect to have everything, and her furniture is magnificent. She is never tired of showing it to her friends. Dr. Müller is seldom at home except at meals, and then he is always fault-finding. But Beate says she fixes her attention on the carving of the sideboard, and treats his observations as so much noise."

"I hope you won't marry a man who allows you to treat his observations as so much noise," said the Professor.

Rosamund was quite close to him now. In fact, she had perched on a corner of his big chair, and he had put an arm round her to keep her there.

"I don't think Dr. Müller likes it," she admitted; "he threw a plate at Beate last week."

"Did Beate tell you so?"

"No. She told Aunt Betty as a secret, and Aunt Betty told me."

"You had better remember that the first time you want to tell your aunt a secret," said the Professor.

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"I have never given you her message," said Rosamund. "She thanks you from her heart for the flowers. I chose roses and lilies of the valley. At least, Herr Witt, who was in the shop at the same time, chose them for me."

"Do you often see Herr Witt?"

"Nearly every day. But sometimes it is only from the opposite side of the road. To-night we met on the stairs, and went to the flower-shop together. Do you think I might tell you a secret, father?"

"I think you might," said the Professor.

"Beate confided in me that she likes Herr Witt a thousand times better than her husband. She asked me if I thought it was wicked."

"What did you say?"

"I said I thought it would be more honourable if she waited till her husband was dead, as Aunt Betty has done."

The Professor sat up.

"My good girl . . ." he began.

"Beate said I was a wicked girl to allude to her husband's death," said Rosamund; "she has not spoken to me since."

"So much the better," said the Professor; "I wish these women had no tongues. They seem to use them for nothing but folly and mischief. If your mother had lived you would not have heard such rubbish talked, and you would have learned never to betray a confidence even to your father. I thought it was a secret of your own you meant to tell."

Rosamund hung her head, and wished she had not chattered so heedlessly. Her father's eyes were fixed on a portrait of his wife opposite him.

"If she had lived . . ." he said again.

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“Was that her wedding-gown?” said Rosamund, who had always seen the portrait there and taken it for granted. “Did she wear her hair like that? and those pearls round her throat?”

“Go to that cupboard,” said the Professor, pointing to the one he meant. “Bring me a leather box that you will see on the top shelf.”

Rosamund found the box, which was a heavy one, and held it for her father while he opened it with a small key. To her surprise, she found that it contained trinkets, and as she looked longer, she remembered having seen her mother wear some of them.

“These things belonged to your mother and to my mother,” said the Professor. “When you are a little older they shall belong to you. But I am going to give you this pearl necklace now. Your mother wore it on her wedding-day, and my mother wore it to her first ball.”

Rosamund felt a little bit guilty as she took the necklace, and thanked her father without telling him that she would wear it this very night at her first ball. She would rather have told him. At the same time, she did not want to offend her aunt or imperil her chance of dancing with Christian Witt. Her father led the life of a recluse, and would probably never hear of her going to the ball. She did not expect him to be angry if he did hear. Ten days ago he had discovered by accident that her aunt had taken her to Beate Müller's Kaffee-Klatsch, and he had made no objection. Her aunt arranged pleasures for her, and her father acquiesced in them when they were over. But he had given her pleasure for once, and she kissed him affectionately as she bade him good-night.

When she got back to her aunt's flat she went straight to the spare room and dressed herself in the

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white voile gown that she had lengthened a little in front. It had lined sleeves, and was high in the neck. In fact, it looked what it was—a summer gown rather the worse for wear, and made some time ago for an older woman than Rosamund. It hung loosely on the girl's undeveloped figure, but it had a train, and she had never worn one before. When she had fastened the pearls round her throat she felt as ready for the ballroom as a young soldier for the battlefield. She took up her gloves and cloak, and ran into Betty's room to show herself.

“Look what father has given me!” she cried, going up to the toilet-table.

For a moment Betty had a disturbing glimpse of the girl's fresh face in close proximity to her own faded one.

“Does Christian always see us together like this?” she thought to herself, and she turned hastily from the glass.

“Very pretty,” she said, speaking of the pearls and appraising her niece's turn-out, which, from her point of view, was not successful. “But you have not made anything of your hair. Sit down and let me run the tongs through it once or twice.”

Rosamund had no opinion of her own in such matters yet. She sat down without a protest, and let her aunt crimp her front hair. The effect when Betty had finished was grotesque. The frizz left here and there by the hot irons did not suit the girl's heavy, unfashionable plaits, and her face fell as she saw her own reflection. Betty felt vexed herself, for she was not anxious to appear in public with a niece who did her so little credit. But there was nothing to be done.

“We shall be late as it is,” she said. “You were

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such a time dressing, and it would take an hour to brush out all that frizz and do your hair properly. Come along! No one knows you yet, but every one in Fichtenstadt knows that gown. It is your father's fault. He ought to buy you proper clothes, and let you have a hair-dresser when you go out. François has done my hair perfectly, hasn't he?"

He certainly had; but Rosamund did not find the sight of Betty's waves and coils as consoling as, of course, she should have done. Her spirits were at a low ebb, and she followed her aunt silently downstairs. The maid should have returned long since with the cab, but it was not in sight yet, and as the ladies waited at the street door they saw Dacre coming towards them.

"Don't let him see us," said Betty, and she drew Rosamund with her behind the door.

He would probably have passed without observing them if the cab, with Betty's maid inside, had not come up just then. The girl jumped out, peered about for her mistress, found her, and entered into a long rigmarole about the scarcity of cabs to-night, when every one was going to the Freemasons' Ball. Dacre stopped, raised his hat, and helped the ladies into the cab.

"What address?" he asked.

Betty told him.

"You had better come too," she added. "I will dance with you, and so will Rosamund."

"I have no ticket," said Dacre.

"You can buy one for four marks at any of the libraries. By the way, don't tell my brother-in-law where we are. He would probably send Luise to bring Rosamund straight home."

"Would he?" said Dacre.

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"He is capable of it."

"Well," said Dacre, "from what I have heard of the Freemasons' Ball, I think he would be right."

"Au revoir!" said Betty. "By the time you come we may have had enough of it. If we have, you shall take us home—otherwise not."

Dacre lifted his hat again, and watched the cab drive away.

"He will tell your father," said Betty.

"I am quite sure he will not," said Rosamund.

VII

DR. OTTO ELSLER had been a mason, and had always taken tickets for the annual ball given by the Freemasons of Fichtenstadt. That he refused to let his wife dance there had been one of Betty's little grievances in her husband's lifetime, and now that he was dead she made a point of going, as she told every one, in honour of his memory. She knew perfectly well that she ought not to take Rosamund with her, and that neither her husband nor the Professor would have allowed it. To let a girl of Rosamund's standing make her *début* there was not exactly a scandal, but it was a blunder—the kind of blunder Betty would sometimes commit with her eyes open, because it suited her at the moment.

Directly they tried to push their way through the ballroom, Rosamund, with all her ignorance of the world, began to suspect that she was in the wrong galley. She found herself shouldered by people whose like she had never expected to meet on terms of equality—people with rougher manners and louder

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colours than she was used to see in her own surroundings. The men who were dancing looked hot; the girls were either arch or stolid; the matrons wore crumpled satin dresses, as blue and red and yellow as Christmas candles. Betty elbowed herself forward, and soon came across people she knew. At first she turned her head now and then to make sure that Rosamund was following her, but they got separated more than once by the crowd. When the music stopped the press became greater than ever, and the girl having lost sight of her aunt, looked round for some place of refuge. But there was not a vacant seat anywhere. Some people jostled her, many stared at her, and she began to wish that she had stayed at home. Then, as you may see the moon emerge from a cloud and light the sky, she suddenly saw the imposing figure of Christian Witt. He was still a long way off, and he did not see her yet, but he was coming her way. Rosamund watched his progress with a beating heart, for there were sirens on all sides, and they made bold to stop him. But he came straight on with his air of energetic purpose, and for a blissful moment she hoped he might be seeking her. She actually took a few steps to meet him, and then she saw that a stout old lady in black had succeeded where the younger ones had failed. She detained him in conversation for a few minutes. Then he broke away, and found himself close to Rosamund. She looked up at him smiling and anxious, and perceived, to her profound dismay, that his face expressed disapproval.

"Where is your aunt?" he said.

"I have no idea," said Rosamund.

He frowned, and went back to the old lady in black. Rosamund followed timidly, supposing that

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he meant to present her. Unfortunately, she overheard what was said.

"That is Professor Elsler's daughter standing about by herself," said Christian. "Some one ought to look after her."

"Who brought her?" said the old lady.

"Betty Elsler; but she has gone off on her own devices."

"I am not acquainted with any of the Elslers. But I recognise the Frau Doctor's last year's frock on the girl, and her hair looks as if she had tumbled into a thorn-bush on her way here. I should have thought the Professor might give his child clothes of her own, and I should have thought he was too high and mighty to let her stand about like a waif at the Freemasons' Ball."

Rosamund was just as anxious now to get away from Christian Witt as she had been a moment before to come across him. She turned hurriedly and took little heed where she was going. The band had just struck up again; young men were rushing here and there for their partners: the eager ones had begun to dance already. Rosamund was nearly thrown down by one of these couples, and only saved herself by clutching at the nearest coat-sleeve. The young man who wore it helped to steady her, put his heels together with a click, made her a bow that suggested he moved on badly-oiled hinges, and said in a high treble voice:

"My name is Aloysius Bremen, student of medicine. May I have the honour of dancing with you?"

The next moment Rosamund was half-way across the room with him, and had begun to enjoy herself. She knew that in a private house young men often introduced themselves in this way by the mere

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mention of their name, and the marked difference between an occasion of that kind and this one was not apparent to her. She danced well and lightly, and the young man's friends, perceiving this, came up and asked her for "extra tours," a German device by which a girl may have half a dozen partners for one dance. While she is on with the new man the old one need not stand deserted. He asks some one else for an "extra tour," but he must watch for the moment when his own partner is ready to return to him. It sounds a confusing plan, but Germans always assure you it is not. Rosamund thought it most agreeable, and without dreaming that she was an object of general attention she danced time after time with six or seven young men, who treated her with great politeness, but who happened to be notorious in the University for their rowdy escapades. Every one in the room knew them, and a few people knew that the pretty girl romping round with them was Professor Elsler's daughter. When they heard that Betty Elsler had brought her, they shrugged their shoulders and said it was Betty's business to look after her niece, so no one interfered.

As time went on Rosamund began to wish that she could get away from her admirers. She was not naturally a tomboy, but she knew that she looked like one this evening, and the idea distressed her. Some of her young men danced with more zeal than grace.

One of them had managed to tread on her skirt and tear it badly, and all of them seemed to reckon dancing a form of violent exercise. Never since she was a child had her cheeks felt so hot or her hair so dishevelled. She knew instinctively that at a public entertainment this was not decorous. But she could

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not see Betty: her friends were persistent and amiable; and several times she had the deep satisfaction of flying past Christian Witt and ignoring him. He had not asked her to dance, and it pleased her to let him see that she did not want for partners.

But Christian heard what people were saying about the girl, and he grew angry. He looked everywhere for Betty, but he could not find her. He was so angry that when a dance came for which they were engaged he took no further trouble, but went instead in search of her niece, who was standing with several of her recent partners near one of the few open windows. She saw him coming, and looked the other way. But that did not deter him. He marched up to the little group, and requested her in a peremptory voice to give him the next dance.

"I am very sorry," said Rosamund; "I am engaged."

"Gnädiges Fräulein is engaged for the rest of the evening to us," said a young man with several scars on his face. He was a "corps" student and an ardent duellist. He would have been delighted to go out with a man as well known as Christian Witt, and leave his sword-mark on the musician's admired features. But Christian Witt had no idea of obliging him. He had made his attempt to extricate Rosamund from an unsuitable situation, and she had not responded. The conduct of Professor Elsler's daughter was, after all, no concern of his, and, with a bow that included the girl and her new acquaintances in its contemptuous acquiescence, he turned his back on the little group and walked away. The boys, for they were nothing more, did their best to hearten and encourage Rosamund, whose face fell as the older man departed. She was soon laughing again, and

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when the young men proposed to take her into supper she accepted their invitation. She was not easy in her mind by this time. She looked enviously at other girls of her age under some older person's wing, and, in spite of her success, she felt the loneliest young woman in the room. Her knights, who had begun the game in a moment of high spirits, soon recognised that they were playing it with a child, and were careful in nowise to alarm her. But they trooped into the supper-room making a good deal of noise, chose a centre table, and placed Rosamund at one end of it. As she sat down she knew for certain that she ought never to have come. She saw disapproval on many faces near her, and she fixed her eyes on the cloth and wished she could get away. She was more conspicuous here than in the crowded ballroom, and more ashamed. She half rose from her seat, but she feared the vociferous protests of her companions. Perhaps if she stayed and conducted herself irreproachably she might show a censorious world that she was equal to any situation. She unfolded her napkin, lifted her eyes, and, with a grown-up air, gave her attention to the menu.

But undignified companions may make your dignity ineffective. Rosamund's escort did not imitate her decorum. They laughed, they gave a multitude of orders, they all recommended different dishes to Rosamund, they attracted birds of their feather to their table, and were soon a larger party. The new-comers were naturally curious about Rosamund, and in whispers asked who she was; but no one seemed to know. They were polite, but did not disguise their amusement at finding her the guest of their friends. Towards the end of supper they grew more uproarious, and when some one proposed to

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drink Rosamund's health in champagne, the idea was received with acclamations.

"Oh, don't let them!" said Rosamund to the duellist who sat next to her. "I ought to go back to my aunt now. Can't you help me to find her?"

But the order had gone forth, and Rosamund had to content herself with her neighbour's assurance that the ceremony would not last half a moment, and that, when it was over, he would take her straight back to the ballroom.

"Who is your aunt?" he asked.

"Frau Dr. Elsler," said Rosamund.

The young man jumped.

"Not Professor Elsler's sister-in-law?"

"Yes. I am Professor Elsler's daughter."

It seemed to Rosamund that the young man invoked his gods in a language she did not understand.

"Here is the champagne," he said. "If I took you away now there would be more fuss than the moment gained is worth. Besides, I should have to explain . . . and it is better not to explain. Surely your honoured father does not know you are here?"

"No," said Rosamund; "Aunt Betty thought it better not to tell him."

By this time the champagne had been poured out. Twenty young men were crowding round the table, and at the given word they all stood up and shouted "Hoch!" and tried to clink glasses with Rosamund. She did her best to oblige them, and, as they hid her from the rest of the room, the ordeal was less painful than it might have been. But it was painful enough. So many faces were pressing round her, so many hands were stretched towards her. She would have liked to break away and run home. She had turned rather white and was nearer tears than any one knew

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when she suddenly set down her glass, and looked as if she wanted the earth to open and swallow her. Behind the shoulders of the students she saw Dacre, and the displeasure in his face convicted her. She did not know whether to be glad or sorry that he had come. She knew he had come for her, and that he would take her with him even in the face of opposition. -She did not look up as he made his way to her end of the table. She waited silently and breathlessly for him to speak.

"I will take this lady back to her friends, gentlemen," he said, and he seemed to address the duellist, whose face and reputation were known to him.

Some of the young men were still clinking glasses with each other, but those near Rosamund had heard Dacre's curt announcement, and were listening tensely for their comrade's reply. He was a leader amongst them, and not one to accept rebuke from a stranger. They were rather surprised to see him make Dacre a profound bow, and to hear him say something civil about their regret at parting with the lady to her friends.

"Until this moment I had no idea who she was," he continued in an undertone and in English. "I should have taken her back to her aunt long since."

"The young lady only left school six weeks ago," said Dacre. "When you remember this evening, I beg you to remember that."

The two men then bowed to each other again, and Dacre walked off with Rosamund, who had listened with downcast eyes and understood every word. It was an uncomfortable progress through the crowded, gaping room.

"Do you know who she was?" said Rosamund's

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first partner, Aloysius Bremen, when she had disappeared.

"Never mind who she was," said the duellist. "If any one knows, I forbid him to say."

"The Englishman is known to every one in Fichtenstadt," said another. "He assists Professor Elsler. The girl was Fräulein Elsler, of course. I remember her now. I have seen her go in and out of her father's house."

So next day there was a duel with swords, and the student who had cried out Rosamund's name received a cut across the chin that kept him indoors for a week. But though all the young men who had drunk Rosamund's health knew her in future and often met her about the town, not one of them ever presumed on the acquaintance so irregularly formed. The duellist explained that she would not desire it, and Rosamund's staid behaviour when she encountered them suggested that he was right.

VIII

As they passed through the ballroom, which was still crowded, Rosamund began to wish Dacre would speak to her. She knew pretty well what he had to say, and that it would not be agreeable to hear. But an unspoken judgment is sometimes worse to bear than a spoken one. It leaves so much to the imagination. Rosamund wondered what he thought of her appearance. She had never seen him in evening dress before, and though she knew nothing of men's clothes, she was much impressed by his. Every other man in the room wore the same costume, but no other

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man wore it with the same air of distinction. Amongst all those heated, crumpled people he looked cool and quiet and dignified.

"Am I very untidy?" she whispered when she could bear his silence no longer.

"You are rather," he said, "but you will soon be at home."

"I think we had better find my aunt, and she will take me to a dressing-room. I have been dancing all the evening, you see."

"I am sorry I could not get here sooner," said Dacre.

"Why did you come at all? Have you been dancing with Aunt Betty?"

"I have not seen your aunt."

"Did my father know you were coming?"

"No."

"Did you tell him I was here?"

"No."

Rosamund turned these answers over in her mind, and then spoke again.

"Aunt Betty said you would tell him," she said. "I felt sure you would not."

"You were right," said Dacre.

"You guessed we should tell him to-morrow?"

Dacre said nothing then, and his silence fretted Rosamund again. She looked at his profile, and felt a little in awe of it. She thought if she could see him full face she would find it easier to make friends. His eyes were always kinder than his features.

"Are you angry?" she said, like a child.

"Not so much with you as with whoever brought you here, and then left you to get into mischief."

"I suppose you mean Aunt Betty?"

"I suppose I do. She brought you here surrep-

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titiously, it seems. She ought to have looked after you. The moment I arrived a man told me you had been romping round the room with three or four students, and were now at supper with them."

"We didn't romp—we danced!" cried Rosamund. "How unkind people are! No one else spoke to me or asked me to dance. Ought I to have sat down in a corner and looked on at all the fun?"

"I believe that is what well-behaved young ladies do when they know no one," said Dacre, trying not to laugh. "Anyhow, I am sure a young lady ought not to go in to supper with a crowd of strange young men. A well-behaved one would rather starve."

"Suppose it had been your sister . . ." began Rosamund.

"I cannot suppose it," said Dacre.

"Has she never done anything as bad?"

"Never. But, then, she has not had your opportunities."

While Rosamund was considering this reply her eyes travelled across the room, and suddenly lighted on Betty.

"There is my aunt with Herr Witt," she said. "Do you know him?"

"I was introduced to him this evening," said Dacre; but he did not say that it was Christian Witt who had told him where Rosamund was to be found, and expressed his relief when the Englishman said he had come on purpose to fetch her away.

"What a little scaramouch she looks!" Betty said meanwhile, as she watched her niece approach her; "she has torn my gown to ribbons. I wish I had never brought her."

"Why didn't you look after her?" said Christian.

"Why didn't she find a seat and keep quiet? If I

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take a girl out for a little fun, I don't expect to nurse her all the evening."

"She certainly looks as if she had had a little fun," said the musician.

"Where *have* you been?" said Betty, as Rosamund came up. "How have you managed to tear your gown like that? Good-evening, Mr. Dacre. My niece cannot dance with you till she has made herself tidy."

"I am not going to ask her to dance with me here," said Dacre; "I look forward to a better opportunity."

Betty was quite quick enough to understand him.

"You would rather take her home?" she said.

"Much rather, if she will consent to come with me."

"Rosamund, you've been naughty," said Betty to her niece; "go home at once with Mr. Dacre, and promise him you'll behave better another time."

"Can't I wait for you, Aunt Betty?" said Rosamund, made angry and unwilling to go by her aunt's mocking tone. But Betty did not hear. She turned away as she spoke, and the crowd had carried her on already.

"Shall we go now?" said Dacre.

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I shall be glad to get you out of this. It's not quite good enough."

"I wonder why you came," said Rosamund, converted to his point of view by his tranquil manner, and also by her appreciation of the contrast between him and the other men there.

"I came to see what you were doing, and, if possible, to bring you away," said Dacre.

"Did you do it to please my father?"

"No," said Dacre; "I did it to please myself."

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"I am afraid you have not got much pleasure out of it," said Rosamund.

While she fetched her cloak from the dressing-room, Dacre got a cab, and put her into it directly she rejoined him.

"I want to tell you about my father," she said, while they were in a quiet street. "I was with him this evening, and he gave me a pearl necklace my mother wore on her wedding-day. He was very kind, and I asked him why he called me a kitten."

"Did he tell you?"

"He said that compared with you I was one, and that I had better remember it."

"Oh, he didn't mean that," said Dacre. "Kitten is a term of endearment."

Rosamund shook her head.

"It means that I am only a girl," she said.

"I hate that phrase," said Dacre.

"But there it is. I can't be a son to my father and help him with his work."

"I can't make a home for him. He needs us both."

"He wants us to be friends."

"I want it too," said Dacre, and then the cab stopped.

"But Aunt Betty has the key of the street door!" cried Rosamund. "How are we to get in?"

"I have both keys," said Dacre. "I got them from Luise when I left."

"My father is not in bed yet," said Rosamund, looking up in surprise. "There is a light in his study. He never sits up as late as this. Can any one have told him about me? Did you tell Luise? What reason did you give for wanting the keys?"

"I gave no reason," said Dacre; "I asked for them. How were you going to get in?"

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"I have a second key. It is at Aunt Betty's," said Rosamund.

As Dacre followed the girl upstairs he felt puzzled and uneasy, for it was now past midnight, and more than two hours ago the Professor had said he was tired and would go to bed. He tried to think of some reason for going into the flat before Rosamund to see if anything was wrong, and when they arrived at the door he waited and said nothing. Luckily, she did not notice his hesitation, because she was hunting for the key of her aunt's flat, hidden under a mat.

"Good-night," she said, looking up again. "I have to go in here first and fetch my things."

"Good-night," said Dacre, wishing she would not linger. But she did.

"Thank you for bringing me home," she said.

"Oh!" said Dacre, inarticulate and pleased.

Then she disappeared, and Dacre opened the adjoining door and went in.

Rosamund went straight to her aunt's spare room, and looked at herself in the glass by the light of her candle. Her hair was a sight! The heavy plaits had been loosened by her boisterous dancing, and the frizzed front hair stood out round her face and reminded her of shock-headed Peter. Her skirt was torn from the gathers, her flowers were crushed and limp, her gloves had split near the thumbs. The sad and truthful tale told by the mirror nearly reduced her to tears. She wondered at Dacre's courage in walking through the room beside such a figure; she wondered what Christian had thought of her. The idea that her father should see her so was intolerable. Of course, she did not mean to go into his study unless he called her, but there was the risk that he would, and then she would have to explain

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where she had been. She hastily smoothed her hair, and put on her black silk gown. Then she took up her candle and an embroidered bag that held her things, and went softly out of the flat. As she shut the door, Luise appeared, and when she saw Rosamund she tried to hurry past her down the stairs.

"What is it, Luise?" called Rosamund, alarmed by her manner and her face.

"Don't hinder me, child," said the old servant; "I am going for the doctor. Your father is ill."

Rosamund flew to the door of the flat, and found that Luise had shut it. As she was fumbling in her bag for her own key, the door was opened from inside, and Dacre stood on the threshold.

"You!" she cried, with evident relief. "He is not alone, then. Is he very ill?"

"Come in," said Dacre.

"Why did you come?" whispered Rosamund. "Did you think he was ill?"

"I feared it."

"I didn't. I should have gone straight to bed. Why don't you let me pass? Where is he? Why do you bring me here?"

Dacre had led the girl into the dining-room, where there was no light except the one made by her candle, which he took from her and set down. She was trembling violently.

"I will wait here with you . . . till your aunt comes," he said.

"Doesn't he want us, then?"

"No," said Dacre.

His eyes had really told her from the beginning. She knew it now. At first she neither spoke nor moved. The shock was so great that she felt numb under it. Then, because she was still trembling,

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she sat down. Dacre watched her anxiously. He thought she was going to faint, and he wished she would cry instead of sitting there dumb and stricken.

"He must have died soon after I left him," he said. "There seems to have been no pain."

"How do you know?"

"At first I thought he was asleep."

"I was dancing," she said—"I was dancing when he was dying. I didn't even know for certain that he was ill."

"He knew very little about it himself till this morning," said Dacre, trying as best he could to comfort her. "Then he was told that it might happen at any moment, or that he might live for weeks."

"Then he knew it when I was with him; he knew it this afternoon when he was talking to you."

"Yes," said Dacre; "he came from the Geheimrath with his death sentence, and the only care or thought he had was for you. He was one of the greatest men of our time, and one of the best. And we have lost him, Rosamund."

"I suppose you are sure," said the girl, looking up suddenly; "you are not a doctor. Can nothing be done?"

She had risen to her feet.

"I am quite sure," said Dacre.

"I want to see him," she said. "But I am afraid."

Dacre took her by the hand and led her into the study. As he opened the door she clung to his arm, and they stood together on the threshold. The Professor had died quite peacefully in his chair. There was no sign of struggle or suffering on his finely-cut face.

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"I have often seen him so," whispered the girl; "perhaps he is only asleep."

But when she had stolen up to him and touched his hands and his lips she knew that he had left her.

IX

It was impossible to think of Betty in connection with the tragedies of life. Dacre could not imagine her mourning, or having much patience with her fellow-creatures in affliction. He waited with Rosamund until they heard her aunt arrive home, and then he went out on to the landing to tell Frau Elsler what had happened. When she saw Dacre she naturally showed surprise, and when she heard his news she looked upset and startled. She asked if a doctor had been sent for, and was told that he had come and gone.

"I'm glad I wasn't here," she said, with a shudder. "That stupid old Luise would have sent for me, and I should have done no good. It's very sad, certainly. Rosamund has no one but me now."

"She has an uncle in England," said Dacre.

"I have one in Java, but he isn't much use to me. Where is Rosamund? Can you send her to me? I don't want to go in there to-night. I suppose she is dreadfully upset. Is she crying? I never know what to say to people when they are crying. She won't really miss her father much, you know, when the first shock is over. She has never seen anything of him. But I can hardly expect her to take a reasonable view to-night, can I?"

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"I'm afraid not," said Dacre. "She seems to think she will miss him a good deal."

"That shows what a sweet disposition she has, I'm sure. Where did you say she was?"

"In the dining-room. Shall I tell her you will see her to-morrow morning?"

"What a heartless idea! Forgive me for saying so, but it could only emanate from an Englishman. Of course, I must hold the poor child in my arms to-night, and our tears must flow together. Please ask her to come over to me at once, Mr. Dacre."

"Very well," said Dacre. "Good-night, Frau Elsler. I shall see you and Rosamund to-morrow morning."

"We shall want a man to help us," said Betty. "Of course, there is Christian Witt, but he is always so busy; not a man of leisure like you and my poor brother-in-law. I suppose I shall have the care of my niece till she is of age or marries. I hope there will be a little money for her. My husband always said that his brother was a poor man, but I never believed it. He contributed more than any one else in the town to a new laboratory some years ago."

Dacre did not feel inclined to explain the Professor's business affairs at that hour of the night, so he got away as soon as he could and went back to Rosamund.

"Your aunt would like to see you," he said.

"Have you told her?"

"Yes."

The girl got up, as it seemed to Dacre, with some reluctance.

"She never cared for my father," she said.

"But she is sorry for you," said Dacre.

They went together to the door of Betty's flat, and

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Rosamund went in. She found Betty waiting for her in the sitting-room, and when she saw her aunt she began to cry again. Betty looked at her niece in dismay, and then led her to the sofa.

"Don't cry," she said; "you'll only make yourself ill. It is a great loss, of course. But these things will happen. Life brings them to us, and we must bear them. Your father was a great man, and had a most successful career. The whole country will mourn him. Perhaps the town will wish him to have a public funeral. There will be a great deal for us to decide and arrange. I think we ought to go to bed at once; it is past one o'clock. If you had only just heard the sad news I would not suggest it. But you have been at home an hour, and now you ought to forget your sorrow in sleep. I dare say Luise is up still. Tell her to make you some *Glühwein*. That is sure to send you off. She might bring me a glass too. I'm quite cold and wide awake."

Rosamund raised her head and tried to stop crying, but she did not succeed at once. Meanwhile her aunt's thoughts ran on the immediate and interesting question of her black clothes; and her eye, following her thoughts, was caught by Rosamund's black gown.

"Why have you changed at this time of night?" she asked.

"When we got to the house we saw a light in my father's study, and we thought he was up still," said Rosamund. "I came in here first and made myself tidy."

"What happened then?"

"Mr. Dacre met me and told me. The light had alarmed him, and he went in to see."

Betty reflected that things had happened for the best, but that it would not show fine feeling to say so.

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She was glad it had not fallen to her to arrive home with Rosamund, and see the light in her brother-in-law's study, and find that he was so suddenly and unexpectedly dead.

"I had no idea that your father was ill," she said. "He was quite himself this morning;" and again she did not utter her thought, which was that he had been as disagreeable as usual.

"I knew he was ill," said Rosamund; "at least, I ought to have known it. Mr. Dacre had warned me. But I didn't know that illness meant . . . this."

She could not say more without beginning to cry again, and her instinct told her that her aunt disliked the sight and sound of tears. She got up and said she would go to bed now. She knew that Luise would be up and sorrowing, and that the old woman would be longing for her.

"Good-night," she said to her aunt; "I will send you in the wine."

"I suppose Luise will look after you," said Betty. "To-morrow you had better come over here. I will have the spare room got ready."

Rosamund found, as she expected, that Luise was waiting up for her, and that she was more in need of care and comfort than any one else. The poor old woman was trembling with cold and misery, and was kneeling in front of the stove in Rosamund's room, trying to light a fire for her. It did Rosamund good to think of her servant instead of herself, and after carrying the hot wine to her aunt, she came back and arranged with Luise that for to-night they would sleep in the same room. The next morning her aunt sent in about ten o'clock to ask her to come over there.

"I have sent for Christian Witt and the dress-

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maker," she said directly she saw Rosamund. "When things happen you always need a man and a milliner. How have you slept? I hope that old Luise wasn't a bore. People of her class express their affliction so unpleasantly. I wonder what is to become of her. She has not been worth her wage for a long time; but of course it is our duty to remember that she was a faithful servant. Your father may have left her something."

Rosamund looked as if she had not slept well. Her eyes were dazed and heavy and her movements languid. She felt as if life would go on henceforward without hope or brightness, and that nothing mattered much in a world her father had left empty.

"Have you heard from Herr Witt?" she said. Even he seemed a long way off now.

"There he is," said Betty as the door-bell rang; and she gave a touch to the sleeves of her heliotrope negligée. But it was the dressmaker who entered the room.

She stayed two hours, and then Betty looked at the clock. Her own wardrobe had been overhauled, her new gowns had been ordered, and she was feeling tired.

"I must go and dress," she said. "What about your things, Rosamund? You had better have a serge for every day and a fine cloth for best. That will do to begin with."

"But how shall I have them made? Like yours?" said Rosamund, who had waited patiently while her aunt discussed fashions and trimmings, thinking every moment that her turn must come next.

"Like mine! Of course not. What suits me would look absurd on you. I was convinced of that last night when I saw you in my gown. By the way,

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I wish you'd fetch it. Fräulein Schwarz might see how it could be mended."

The dressmaker interposed here, said that she had an appointment at her own house in a few minutes, and that she would like to be told before she left how the young lady's gowns were to be made. The table was littered with fashion-papers, and Rosamund began to look helplessly through them. She knew nothing about clothes. Betty, with an air of impatience and fatigue, threw herself into an easy-chair.

"Make my niece two plain black frocks such as you make for young ladies of her age," she said. "Give her a silk collar with the cloth, and put a few rows of stitching on the serge. There is nothing to choose about a black frock. Anything plain will do. You can see for yourself that Fräulein is not difficult to please."

The dressmaker could not help smiling, for Rosamund wore her shepherd's plaid frock this morning; but she felt sorry for the pretty, sorrowful-looking girl, and she did not love Betty. No one who served or worked for her did.

"I will send the young lady something better than that," she said.

"I am sure I hope she will," said Rosamund when the woman had gone.

"If you take no interest in your clothes, you can't expect them to be a success," said Betty. "Why didn't you tell her how you wanted them made?"

"Because I have no ideas. At school we wore this shepherd's plaid every week-day and the maroon merino on Sundays. We didn't seem to know there were other clothes in the world."

"I always told your father he was doing the worst

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thing he could for you. A woman isn't a bird; she doesn't grow feathers. If you live amongst people who dress badly you are pretty sure to dress badly yourself. That is why I go to Paris so often. You can get ideas there that will last you a few months. Christian Witt says that I am the best-dressed woman in Fichtenstadt, and I must say that when I see the others I agree with him."

"I don't want to be a fashion-doll," said Rosamund, remembering what her father had said about fool-women and clothes.

"You would show more sense if you said you didn't want to be a scarecrow," said Betty. "That's your danger at present. Really, I can't see what a school like the Dorotheenstift *does* teach a girl . . . that she ever wants. You can't dress, you can't do your hair, and you can't behave. Christian Witt says you were tearing round the room with some strange students last night. He was horrified. He plays about a good deal himself, I fancy, so of course his ideas of propriety are very strict. If your father had not died you would be the talk of the town to-day, and I should have to go round explaining that you were just out of the nursery and didn't know better. As it is, you won't go to another dance for a year, and by that time people will have some one else to pull to pieces. I wish I knew more about your father's affairs. I suppose you will have to live with me. I am only waiting for Christian Witt to come and advise us what steps to take. Mr. Dacre promised to come this morning, but no doubt he has forgotten all about us. I think I'll go and dress now."

Rosamund felt thankful when her aunt did go and dress. She longed to be alone. But Betty soon came back again, brisk and busy, her hands full of

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letters and telegrams that had just arrived. She looked through the first few hastily and passed them to Rosamund, then pounced on one from Christian Witt.

"He cannot come," she said, reading aloud from it. "He has to conduct at Bertholdsruhe this afternoon. Of course, his time is not his own. But he says our news has filled him with grief, that his thoughts will follow us night and day, and that he weeps over the loss to the world of so great a man. I expect that blot on his signature was made by a tear. Yet he hardly knew your father. How different from Mr. Dacre! He told me what had happened, and never even said he was sorry. As for a tear, I don't suppose he could shed one if he tried. I am glad he has not come. His indifferent manner would jar on me."

Rosamund took Christian Witt's letter from her aunt and read it and re-read it. She found no fault with the handwriting, which was like fireworks, nor with the phrases of condolence, which were artificial. The fact that it came from him singled it out from all other letters arriving that day. As she looked at the open page she absently tore the envelope into small pieces and threw it into a waste-paper basket. When Betty had looked through her correspondence and torn up some of it, she turned to her niece and took back Christian Witt's letter.

"Where is the envelope?" she said.

Rosamund looked blankly at her empty hands and then on the table.

"I must have torn it up. I believe I did," she said.

Betty almost shrieked.

"We must find the pieces," she said. "I have never thrown away so much as a postcard or a telegram from him. Sometimes he sends me messages

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in a hurry on scraps of parcel paper. I have them all."

The two ladies knelt down, overturned the contents of the waste-paper basket, and began their search. It was a tedious business, for the basket had been full, and Rosamund had unluckily torn the envelope into little pieces. They had only found about half of it when the door-bell rang, and Dacre, with an open telegram in his hands, was shown into the room. When he saw the ladies grovelling on the floor over a heap of torn-up papers he naturally thought they had lost something valuable, and asked if he could assist them.

"It is nothing of importance," said Betty, getting up to receive him.

Rosamund got up too, and shook hands, but she went down on her knees again almost directly.

"It is most unfortunate . . ." began Dacre.

"Two more pieces!" cried Rosamund, too intent on her own business to listen to his.

"What can you be doing?" said Dacre, looking down at her.

"It is Herr Witt's envelope," she said, pointing to the pieces put together on the carpet like a puzzle. "I tore it up without thinking."

"Was there anything on it, then, except the address?"

"No," said Rosamund, and would have gone on with her search if her aunt had not seen that Dacre wanted the girl's attention.

"Never mind the rest now," she said to her niece, and signed to her to get up from the floor.

"This telegram is from your uncle in England," said Dacre. "I am sorry to say that he is ill and cannot come."

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"But who sent for him?" said Betty.

"I did," said Dacre.

Without speaking, Betty expressed surprise.

"I had not thought it necessary," she said, after a significant silence.

"I was within my rights," explained Dacre with composure. "Dr. Arden and I are Professor Elsler's executors and co-trustees."

"When was that arrangement made?"

"Yesterday . . . after the Geheimrath had warned your brother-in-law that he had not long to live."

"Yes," said Rosamund. "You knew it yesterday and never told me. And we were both at a ball when he died."

Dacre made no attempt just then to defend himself, partly because Betty went on speaking. She was visibly ruffled already.

"Do you mean," she said, "that my brother-in-law has left his affairs to foreigners instead of his own countrymen?"

"Dr. Arden is Rosamund's nearest relative," said Dacre, "and I had the honour to be her father's friend."

"Who will be Rosamund's guardian till she is of age?"

"Dr. Arden in the first place . . ."

"Am I assigned a second place, then?" suggested Betty mockingly.

"No," said Dacre; "I take the second place."

"You!"

"You!" echoed Rosamund.

There was an uncomfortable pause. Betty looked angry, Rosamund astonished, and Dacre as if he wished the interview was over.

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"I suppose," said Rosamund, "that my father thought it better to let men see to business matters. He must have meant me to live with Aunt Betty. Did he say anything about that?"

"He has left your uncle full powers," said Dacre evasively. "For the next three years Dr. Arden will decide where you are to live. No doubt he will consult your wishes."

"Dr. Arden is ill," said Betty, looking at the telegram Dacre had brought with him. "Suppose he died? Would his authority pass to you?"

"As a matter of fact, I share it," said Dacre. "If he died I should either stand alone or appoint some one to act with me. But I hope he will live."

"The situation is absurd," said Betty brusquely. "As a matter of fact, Rosamund has no one in the world to look to but me, and her father knew it. How old are you?"

"I am thirty-one," said Dacre.

"And unmarried! But the good Professor has made fools of us all. Of course you tried to remonstrate with him, to show him the folly of such an arrangement?"

"I was more anxious to fulfil his wishes than to criticise them," said Dacre.

"And you are *sure* he was in his right mind, I suppose? Not a little unhinged by his state of health, for instance?" *Being consulted*

"The Geheimrath would bear witness to that," said Dacre, meeting the lady's glance squarely. "But I am quite satisfied myself that he was as sane and capable as you are."

"He has not considered his daughter much, or me either," said Betty. "But that is an old story. It is a great pleasure to reflect that the whole country

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will hear of his regard for you. Every one in Fichtenstadt will ask me about Rosamund's affairs, and I shall have to explain that I have nothing to do with them. I suppose I shall be told in course of time what my niece will have to live on."

"It will not be much, I am sorry to say. But I hope we may sell the Professor's library well, and add something to the capital. There will be about a hundred a year."

"It is lucky her tastes are simple," said Betty.

X

DACRE saw that Rosamund was thinking of her father and not of her own future. She sat opposite him with a dazed, absent look on her face, and he felt sure that she only half followed what was said. Yet sometimes her glance, fixed reflectively on him, seemed to show that she was thinking about their new relation to each other. He went on to tell Betty of the arrangements proposed for the funeral. The Professor's celebrity made his demise a public event, and public honours to his remains had at once been offered. There were many little matters to arrange in connection with this, and even while Dacre sat with the ladies, messages and telegrams were brought to him.

"I am afraid our affairs are giving you a great deal of trouble," said Betty. "But how is it these questions are placed before you, and not before Rosamund and me?"

"I am placing them before you," said Dacre. "I

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told the University authorities and Herr Richter, the Professor's lawyer, that I should see you to-day."

"Does the whole town know already that my brother-in-law left everything in your hands?"

"I can't tell you what the town knows. It may be misinformed. Everything is not in my hands."

"Dr. Arden can do nothing while he is in England and ill."

"I hope he will not be ill long," said Dacre. "I want to go to America as soon as possible. By the way, I have not spoken to you yet about the Professor's unfinished work on Corals, but perhaps you know that I hope to carry it on."

"I know nothing about the Professor's work," said Betty. "I don't even understand why people made such a fuss of him. If he began a book, why couldn't he get it done? He had plenty of time on his hands. I don't believe he has dined out or entertained any one since his wife died, eight or nine years ago. He ought to have saved more money. I wonder if he has provided for old Luise?"

Dacre reassured Frau Elsler on this point, and then got up to go.

"You know where I am to be found if you want me," he said to Rosamund.

"Shall I write to my uncle, or will you?" she asked, walking to the door with him.

"I must write in the way of business," said Dacre. "But you may write too."

"I want to remain in Germany," she said. "Do you think if I tell my uncle so he will consent?"

"He might," said Dacre uncertainly.

"Probably you could persuade him that it was best for me."

"But I am not sure that it is," said Dacre.

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"How can you have an opinion? You hardly know me."

"Well, I know what your father's wishes were."

"I have wishes of my own. My father never recognised that. I hope you will."

"We must wait and hear what your uncle says," said Dacre, trying to put her off.

"I am not thinking now about my uncle," she persisted. "I want you to tell him I ought to stay in Germany. Will you do so?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because your father wished you to go to England."

"He knew as little about me as you do. Aunt Betty is quite right. I have no one in the world but her, and it is cruel to separate us."

"My dear child . . ." began Dacre mistakenly. Rosamund flushed with indignation at this form of address.

"I wish you would remember that I am no longer a child," she said.

Dacre took his coat down and got into it. He felt angry and discouraged.

"Good-bye," he said rather stiffly.

"You were very kind to me last night," said Rosamund. "Why are you unkind and condescending to-day?"

"Condescending?"

"You should recognise that I am not a child, and that I ought to live with Aunt Betty. It is true that she did not appreciate my father, but neither did he understand her. He actually thought she was fickle."

"H . . . m!" said Dacre. His anger evaporated as he surveyed the quaintly dressed young creature

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trying to hold her own with him. He smiled at her as he might have smiled at a child, with kindly toleration. "I must remember that you are grown up, then," he said. "Would you like me to call you Miss Elsler in future?"

Rosamund looked down, not at her feet, which were pretty and slender, but at the hideous felt slippers in which they were cased. She did not understand why, but she felt suddenly and strangely conscious of her grotesque clothes and of her rough, uncared-for hands.

"Perhaps it would remind you that I am in my nineteenth year," she said.

Then she went back to her bedroom, sat down before her glass, and astonished Betty by coming into dinner with her hair arranged in a new way. She had parted it in the middle, combed it over her ears, and fastened it in a heavy knot on her neck. With her shepherd's plaid frock and her felt shoes the effect was, of course, ridiculous.

"It won't do with your clothes," said Betty, cocking her head a little to judge of the effect. "You can't go about the streets of Fichtenstadt looking like a French poster. Where did you get the idea?"

"From one of the fashion-books this morning."

"If you shut your eyes till you open a fashion-book, you'll always come to grief. The way to dress well is to watch well-dressed people, and let them leaven your ideas. Fashion-books are useful as reminders, but you must know what to avoid. You have beautiful hair, and if you were going to play a Maeterlinck princess at the Stadt Theater . . ."

"Have I beautiful hair?" cried Rosamund, too much pleased to mind her manners.

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"I happen to think so," said Betty carelessly. "Of course, many people hate that colour."

"Do they?"

"Don't you remember how Christian Witt shuddered at the thought of Frau Leite as Isolde? She has red hair, you know."

Frau Leite was a singer who came over from Bertholdsruhe occasionally. She weighed fifteen stone, had pale carrotty hair, a freckled skin, no eyebrows, and snub features. But Rosamund had never seen her, and she felt dejected. After dinner she plaited her hair tightly at the back of her head again, and wore it so for some time to come.

During the next few days the two ladies saw a great deal of Dacre and very little of Christian Witt. Various matters connected, first with the funeral, and then with the settlement of Rosamund's money affairs, brought Dacre, as well as Herr Richter, to Betty's flat. There was no fresh news from Dr. Arden yet, and the question of Rosamund's domicile remained in abeyance. Dacre addressed her once or twice as Miss Elsler, and then seemed to forget about it, though she certainly looked more grown up in her new black frocks, and so pretty that Betty scolded the dressmaker for forgetting that deep mourning ought not to be coquettish. Old Luise remained in the next-door flat, and Rosamund, who still had the key, often sat with her. One afternoon, nearly three weeks after her father's death, she went over there, and found that Luise had gone out. Her aunt was out too, so she did not go back at once. She went into her own old room and then into the dining-room, where it was bitterly cold. Then it came into her mind that she would like to see the study again, and her father's books and writing-table.

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The picture of him was so vividly in her mind that she could hardly imagine his chair empty and his room desolate. She lingered with her hand on the latch, half scared by the silence and her loneliness. But a slight sound within the room so startled her that she opened the door with an involuntary jerk, and stood on the threshold in surprise. The room was not cold and orderly and vacant, as she had expected to find it. Dacre sat at the writing-table, which was covered with books and papers, and the air was warm. He looked up, and when he saw Rosamund he came to meet her.

"I work here still sometimes," he said. "Did Luise tell you I was here to-day?"

Rosamund shook her head.

"She is out," she said. "She told me one day last week you were here, and then I did not come in. I was afraid of disturbing you."

"You don't disturb me," said Dacre. "Besides . . ." His eyes travelled round the walls, lined from floor to ceiling with books. "I have been wanting to ask you about these books," he said. "Are there any you would like to keep?"

"I should like to keep them all. But Aunt Betty hates books, except just a few behind glass doors. She says no one clean would have many about. When Uncle Otto died she sold all his."

"These have been valued at a thousand pounds."

"I wonder who will buy them . . . or whether any one will?"

"They are sold and paid for, and the money is invested," said Dacre.

"Then how can I take any of them?" said Rosamund.

"I can easily arrange that . . . if you will just

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tell me which you want . . . in fact, I had picked out a few I thought you might like. . . . Here they are."

Rosamund went rather forlornly up to the shelf Dacre pointed out, and found that he had set aside the little English Temple Shakespeare for her, a good edition of Goethe, and about a hundred volumes more — French, English, and German. Some she had read, and many she knew by name and hoped to read.

"But Aunt Betty will never let me put them up," she said. "I should love to have them."

"I will see that you do have them, then," said Dacre.

"Is the furniture to be sold too?" said Rosamund.

"Are you anxious to keep any of it?"

"There are one or two things . . . and I should like to give some to Luise. She is not going to service again, and she has to furnish a room. I think my father would have wished it."

"Very well," said Dacre. He paused a little, and then he looked amongst the papers on the table for a letter, which he presently found. "I was coming to see you this evening," he said; "I have had news of your uncle again. His doctor writes. I am afraid he is seriously ill. He has just been able to sign a power of attorney empowering me to act without him. Luckily, everything is fairly plain sailing now. Herr Richter and I can do what is necessary before I start for America."

"How long shall you be there?"

"Some months. I hope to get back in July."

Rosamund looked at the letter in her hands again.

"What shall I do if my uncle sends for me or fetches me while you are away?" she asked.

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"You would have to go," said Dacre.

"But I have never seen him. I might not like him at all, or the conditions of life that he has to offer."

"That would be unfortunate," said Dacre.

There were moments when Rosamund hated him, and this was one of them. He made her feel that she had no weapons, and that beneath all his kindness there was rock. She could have stamped her foot at him if it had been a possible thing to do.

"I want to make Aunt Betty some amends for the slight my father put on her," she said. "She feels it deeply, I know. Have you any objection?"

"What do you want to do?" said Dacre.

She went to the old mahogany cupboard and opened it; but she did not see what she expected.

"There was a jewel-case," she said.

"I have sent it to the bank," said Dacre.

"Why have you done that?"

"I thought it was safer. I have sent the silver there too."

"I don't want the silver, but I want the other things. There is a diamond comb and an emerald ring that belonged to my grandmother, and I wish to give them to Aunt Betty. In fact, she says they are hers by rights, because her husband was the elder son. But my father married first, and somehow they got into his wife's hands."

"I think I can set your mind easy on that point," said Dacre. "It was not 'somehow' at all. They were your grandmother's wedding presents to your mother. But of course I can't go back in that way. The things came into my hands as your father's property, and I hold them in trust for you. I have no power to give them to any one else."

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"But they are mine."

"They will be yours."

Rosamund turned from the cupboard and looked at him. If he had a temper, it was under control; if he felt impatient with her, he did not show it. He hardly moved as he talked; his hands never flashed subtleties of meaning, as Christian Witt's did; his square-set shoulders were incapable of a shrug.

"You might let me have those two things to give my aunt."

"Your aunt has fixed on the most valuable things in the collection," said Dacre dryly.

"Never mind," said Rosamund. "They are mine, and I wish her to have them."

"Very well," said Dacre.

She thought she had prevailed, and felt both surprised and pleased, but at the back of her mind a little disappointed with him.

"Of course, she will have to wait till you are of age," he added.

"Oh!" she cried naïvely. "I thought you were going to give in."

He looked rather amused, and began to talk of something else.

"You will like to know what money arrangements I have made for you while I am away," he said. "A certain sum will be paid to your aunt for your maintenance . . . and the rest . . . it is not very much . . . will be paid to you every month for clothes and personal expenses. Then I have told Herr Richter that if you want money for a journey to England it may be advanced to you."

"I hope I shall not want that," said Rosamund. "Aunt Betty is going to Obermatt in August, and I have set my heart on going with her."

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"Have you?" said Dacre.

"Yes. Herr Witt is coming there too."

"Is he?"

Dacre had sat down at the writing-table again, and was absently arranging some papers.

"If you are still in Germany when I get back from America, I shall come and see you," he said. "But if you are in England, as I hope you will be, I want you to come and stay with my sister and me at Ormathwaite."

"Where is Ormathwaite?" asked Rosamund when she had thanked him for the invitation.

"In the North of England. It is the name of my home."

"Does your sister live there?"

"She is a good deal away," said Dacre. "Otherwise, if your uncle fails you, you might have come to us. As things are, I am afraid it is impossible for long together."

"It is very kind of you to think of it," said Rosamund. "But Aunt Betty has not failed me, so I am not without a home."

She got up to go, and Dacre did not try to detain her. He went with her to the door of the flat.

"Don't forget to let me know what furniture you want to keep," he said.

"I wish you would change your mind about the ring and the comb," said she.

He did not say anything. From his point of view there was nothing more to be said. His silence made her wish she had not spoken.

"By the way, who bought my father's library?" she said in a hurry.

"I did," said he, after a moment's hesitation.

"You! Did any one else make an offer for it?"

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"Not for the whole."

"It is going to England, then."

"Yes."

Rosamund, after a little reflection, held out her hand.

"I am much obliged to you for all you have done for me," she said demurely.

XI

You cannot see the village of Obermatt from the valley, and it takes two hours of leisurely uphill walking to get there. When you arrive you find a good-sized hotel, surrounded by forest, and that is all. There is no village street and no corporate village life, but only a few scattered peasant homesteads with thatched roofs and deep, overhanging eaves. The hotel is crowded in the summer season, but Betty had written in good time to secure rooms for herself and her niece. They had arrived ten days ago, and Betty had several quarrels on hand already and several flirtations. She was enjoying herself famously. Rosamund she left to her own devices.

"There is no need for us to be constantly together here," she said to her niece. "You must make friends with some girls of your own age. When I come to Obermatt I like to sit by myself and read poetry and look at the trees. Above all, I desire to avoid the hotel gossip."

By this time Rosamund naturally knew more about her aunt than she had done six months ago. Otherwise, at the end of ten days she would have thought that Betty was having an unfruitful time. She was

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never alone for an hour, and she was involved in every dispute and every excitement that shook the social system of the hotel. Whether she sat on the terrace with a group of friends, or walked in the woods with one or more of her admirers, she was a centre of mischief and, as it seemed, of amusement. Major Vollmar and Herr Lübeck shadowed her, and Rosamund could not help wondering what would happen when Christian Witt arrived. He was expected this afternoon, and Betty had allowed it to be generally known that he was a genius of the first order and her devoted friend.

Rosamund had not seen her aunt yet to-day. She had found a comfortable seat in the forest directly after breakfast, and had sat there all the morning with her embroidery. Somehow she had not made friends yet with any one in the hotel. She was too shy to take the first steps, too quiet and girlish to attract the men, and too nearly connected with Betty to please the women. But she was happier here than she had been of late in Fichtenstadt. It was more agreeable to be on neutral ground than on her aunt's flat, where she had come to feel herself in the way.

There was nowhere else for her to be, however. Her uncle had written to her in a trembling hand and offered her a home as soon as he should be well again. But a few weeks later a letter came from a firm of English solicitors to say that Dr. Arden was dead, and had left his niece a little legacy of a hundred pounds.

"This settles it," Betty had said in a tone of resignation. "You must live with me."

On looking back, it seemed to Rosamund that directly the question was settled the difficulties began. As long as she was to live in England Betty wanted

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her, but when Betty's home became the only one available, Betty began to see drawbacks. She had only one spare room, and Rosamund occupied it. The maids had more to do. Rosamund's clothes required supervision. Rosamund wanted to practise, and the sound of scales got on Betty's nerves. Worst of all, Rosamund was always there—when Betty felt cross, when Betty felt tired, when her friends came, when Christian Witt came. The situation was quite simple: Betty liked the regular sum paid for Rosamund's expenses, but she was tired of having the girl always about. When she thought of the money she was civil, when she felt out of humour she showed it. She had no idea of being unkind, but she had always been one of those people who manage to make their surroundings spoil them. She was selfish and capricious, and when it suited her she could be unscrupulous. Lately she had begun to wish her niece out of the way on Christian Witt's account, and she had sometimes shown this too plainly for the girl's comfort. The Egeria to a genius is just as jealous of a rival as a woman who has more definite claims.

As Rosamund sat over her embroidery this morning she thought of these things, but without condemning her aunt. She was puzzled and a little hurt by Betty's occasional want of friendliness, but she still took her elders for granted almost as a child does, and only wished they were invariably just and amiable. When she thought of Christian Witt's arrival a few hours hence, the immediate future looked golden. He still called her *Kind*. He never seemed to recognise the full count of her years, but he had made much of her of late. All through the spring and summer he had given her singing lessons, and, busy as he was,

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he made time to sit with her aunt and her and entertain them. For no one could be dull in Christian's company. Either he delighted you with his music or he amused you by his talk, which expressed his view of life with much humour and vivacity.

When the dinner-bell rang at one o'clock, and Rosamund followed a stream of hungry people into the dining-room, she could hardly put herself back into the frame of mind that depended on Betty's affection and swore by her friendship. From her place at the dinner-table she watched her aunt enter the room, and admitted that she knew how to dress and walk, and how to bow to people with a little air of condescension, amusing to her friends and enraging to her enemies. She nodded to her niece as she sat down, and asked her where she had hidden herself all the morning.

"I've been playing croquet with Major Vollmar," she went on, without waiting for Rosamund's answer. "Those English girls came and looked on, so I knew they coveted the ground. Such objects as they are! They come in from a walk all hot and melting, so that you want to look the other way. And they talk about people in English, as if there was any one here who did not understand English. However, I believe I've stopped that. They were standing close to me, and the one without a waist said quite loudly, 'That woman can't play for nuts!' Major Vollmar was near too, so I said to him in German, 'That woman in mouldy green has very bad manners. Do you know who she is?'"

"I wonder if they understood?" said Rosamund, horror-stricken at this passage of arms.

"I am sure they did," said Betty, helping herself to horse-radish sauce with an air of satisfaction. "I

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have heard them speak German to the servants. Besides, they got red and moved away."

Rosamund wished her aunt was less pugnacious. In spite of their clothes, she liked the looks of the English girls, and would gladly have made friends with them. She did not attach much weight to their making audible remarks in English about their German neighbours, because she had been told that it is the way of some English to do this abroad, just as it is the way of some Germans to eat with a knife. The Miss Harringtons had not been very well brought up, perhaps, but they belonged to a large, cheerful party, and never sat down in solitude to embroider pocket-handkerchiefs.

"What are you going to do this afternoon?" she asked her aunt.

"In this heat? Nothing at all. Go to sleep if I can."

"I thought perhaps you would walk down to Niedermatt and meet Herr Witt, and that I might go with you."

Rosamund meant to make this proposal with a matter-of-fact air, but her aunt's glance of derision flurried her. Half-way through she blushed.

"Can't you wait till he comes?" said Betty.

After dinner every one streamed out of doors again and Betty sat on the terrace with her two admirers, Major Vollmar and Herr Lübeck. Rosamund did not sit down with them. When she first came to Obermatt she would have done so, but she had seen lately that she was not always wanted. At first she stood about on the terrace, feeling a little forlorn. Then she went up to her own room and read for an hour, and then, though she had an uncomfortable idea that her aunt would disapprove, she changed her

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gown. She took off her crumpled black linen and put on a white delaine that had little black spots on it, and was fresh and elegant. She wore a broad black sash with it and a shady black hat. When she was ready she looked wistfully in the glass, and wondered whether, in spite of her red hair, Christian Witt would think her pretty. She was proud of the delaine gown, because she had chosen it herself, and paid for it out of the money that came to her every month for her private expenses. When Betty had first been told of this arrangement she had demurred to it.

"Rosamund has never had a shilling of her own," she said to Dacre. "You cannot expect her to manage money yet."

"I do expect it," said Dacre. "She is old enough to have an allowance for her clothes and such things."

"She will probably get into debt."

"I promise not to do that," said Rosamund. And she had kept her promise, and had never ceased to thank Dacre for securing her independence to this extent. She had managed her money very sensibly so far, and had saved some to pay her journey here and the extra cost of hotel life. Her uncle's little legacy had not come into her hands. Herr Richter said it ought to be added to her capital and invested, and she had taken his advice. Dacre had written last from the Bermudas, and said he expected to be in Fichtenstadt again early in August, and that if she went away with her aunt she must leave her address with Herr Richter. She had done this, and knew, therefore, that her guardian might appear any day at Obermatt.

By the time Rosamund was ready to go out it was

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five o'clock, and she knew that Christian Witt would arrive at the station in the valley at half-past four. She did not know whether he would send on his luggage and walk through the woods, or whether he would hire a carriage and drive. The hotel did not possess an omnibus, but it sent down a cart for luggage. She made up her mind that she would take her usual afternoon walk, and that she might as well take the path leading down to Niedermatt. She often went that way, and so did every one else in the hotel. There was a confectioner at Niedermatt where you could get coffee and cakes and ices, and walk back again in time for the hotel supper. The hilltops surrounding Obermatt were not as well provided with refreshments as they should have been, and on that account were not popular with the German visitors. Rosamund had never been any long walk yet, because she never had a companion. This afternoon she thought she might reach a seat commanding a stretch of the carriage-road and close to the path. Any one coming from Niedermatt must pass there. In fact, it was a favourite look-out, and she did not for a moment expect to have it to herself.

The hotel clock struck the half-hour before she got there. She could not see the seat yet, but she heard voices, and as she drew nearer she thought she recognised them. The next step took her in sight before she had decided whether she would rather turn back or go on. There sat her Aunt Betty, looking as fresh as a daisy, and there sat Christian Witt beside her; and they both laughed when they beheld Rosamund, because she stood still and showed her surprise.

"How did you get here . . . so soon?" she said to Christian, as he shook hands with her.

"Your aunt came down in a carriage, and we drove

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up as far as this," he said. "We thought we would get out here and walk."

Betty's eyes were fixed on the girl with unfriendly interrogation.

"What became of you after dinner?" she said. "You vanished. You might have driven down with me. It was a sudden idea."

"I was in my room," said Rosamund.

"Making yourself so smart," said Betty.

Christian Witt glanced from the aunt to the niece. They spoke civilly, but so do men about to fight a duel. He heard a note of delicate derision in Betty's tone, and of indignation in Rosamund's. But it never surprised him to see two women hostile to each other, especially when he stood between them. The situation was so recurrent that, like a wise man, he had ceased to trouble about it. Somehow these affairs settled themselves in the long-run. He talked impartially to both ladies on the way home, called Betty "Dear friend" and Rosamund "Dear child," and gave them ten days' news of Fichtenstadt. When they got to the hotel they sat on the terrace for some time and looked at the Alpine view. Every one else out there looked at Christian Witt, whose reputation, thanks to Betty, had preceded him. His looks, his pleasant voice, and his jolly laugh made most people hope to know him. Presently he went into the hotel to find his room, and when he came down again he found Rosamund in the rear of the whole company, on its way in to supper.

"I suppose I shall sit with your aunt and you?" he said.

"I don't know what my aunt has arranged," said Rosamund.

But when they got to the dining-room they saw

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what Betty had arranged. She had taken the centre seat of three side ones left for them at the end of a long table, and there is no doubt that under the circumstances most men would have acquiesced in her arrangement, however little they liked it. But Christian did not consider acquiescence a virtue; even politeness he regarded as an ornament to be discarded any time when it stood in his way.

"I want to sit between you and the child," he said. "I want to talk to you both."

"You don't expect me to get up?" said Betty.

But she might have known that he would have his way. Of course, it was a lucky chance for him that the end seat was unoccupied. But luck loves men of Christian's temperament. He signed to Rosamund to take the end seat, and sat down himself between the two ladies. A waitress came forward and brought Rosamund knives and forks and glasses from the place now left empty on her aunt's right hand. It did not improve Betty's temper to know that some of the women who loved her were watching and smiling.

"What a fuss!" she said to Christian. "You will turn the girl's head, and you will mislead people. My niece has grown up. Don't you see?"

"I don't want to see," said Christian.

"She will be nineteen on Thursday. At her age I was married."

"Some natures develop earlier than others," said Christian sententiously; and then he changed the subject.

Towards the end of the meal he began to talk of a campaign he meant to inaugurate against the management of the opera at Fichtenstadt. Sloth, incompetence, and jobbery could all be proved against it,

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he swore, and he was going to fight for a better state of things, whatever the consequences might be.

"I can tell you exactly what the consequences will be," said Betty. "You will raise enemies in every quarter, and finally be driven from the town. Where Michaelis failed you will fail."

"I don't believe it," said Christian. "Michaelis was too sensitive for a fighter. Any blackguard could make him miserable. I've no poetry of that kind in my composition. If I attack rascals I expect them to retaliate like rascals, and not like decent people."

"You are a young man at the beginning of a great career. Leave people alone till you are stronger."

"I am strong enough for anything," said Christian, laughing. "I'm one of the best musicians in Germany. I can always make my way . . . if not here . . . then in England or America. I had a letter yesterday from an Englishman who was with me at Leipsic. He is getting up some concerts in his own town, and asks me to come over and conduct at two of them. He says quite half the orchestra would understand when I damned them in German. Child," he said, turning suddenly to Rosamund, "we will speak English together all day here, and you shall correct my mistakes; then I shall know how to damn in English also."

"But you are not judicious," persisted Betty. "You are inclined to offend people in power."

Christian was still looking at Rosamund, and he saw that she did not agree with her aunt.

"What are you thinking of?" he said in a low voice; and she was able to answer in a low voice, for just then every one got up from table, and there was a good deal of noise.

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"I was thinking that Siegfried was not judicious when he killed the Worm," she said. "He might have been killed himself."

"H . . . m!" growled Christian, "I'm not exactly a Siegfried, either. Don't get romantic ideas into your head, child, about me. I've half the town on my side already."

"So had Michaelis," said Betty, who heard the last few words.

"But they made him afraid," said Rosamund.

"You don't know what a coward I am," said Christian. "I've often run away from a woman!"

XII

AFTER supper Betty sat down at one of the little veranda tables with Rosamund and Christian Witt, and directly they were settled Major Vollmar and Herr Lübeck joined them. For ten days they had been welcome to Betty from morning till night, and they did not see why a new-comer should displace them. Besides, they liked the looks of the musician. He made room for them in the most friendly way, and told one or two good stories while he smoked a cigar. Then he turned to Rosamund, and asked if there was a decent piano in the hotel. Rosamund said it was not bad, but that after supper the English girls usually took possession of it.

"We'll see," said Christian, getting up. "I don't care for this veranda; it's too full of people."

"If we leave this table we shall not get it again to-night," said Betty. "I always spend the evening here."

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"Nothing will induce me to," said Christian. "I want some air, and then I want some music."

He stood up, and, looking at Rosamund, made an imaginary flute of his fingers, fluted a few notes of the bird-call in *Siegfried* to her, and smiled. She got up too, as if she meant to follow him.

"Rosamund, where are you going?" said her aunt sharply.

"She is coming with me," said Christian, and straightway marched off with her. He certainly had no manners, but Rosamund did not think that mattered as she walked beside him. Nevertheless, when she spoke it was to reproach him.

"I told you I would not come when you fluted to me," she protested. "As if you were the piper and I was . . . a rat!"

"A child," he amended. "And I told you you would come, and here you are."

"It was the moon that drew me," said Rosamund.

He took her beyond the terrace to a seat from which they could look down on the forest and the great moonlit plain lying between their hills and the snow mountains of Switzerland. They sat there for some time enjoying the stillness and the cool, scented air, and he talked to her about a great Beethoven festival in Vienna to which he was going next month. He did not make love to her, but the beauty of the night wrapped the girl round with its own glamour. She was sorry when Christian said in a matter-of-fact way that it was getting chilly, and that they would go in and look at the piano now.

Rosamund led him to a big barn-like room, where children played on wet days and young people sometimes danced after supper. There was a cottage piano in one corner, and one of the English girls was

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singing a song to her own accompaniment. Her mother, her sister, and three feminine cousins were all listening, but they were talking too. It was a mournful song—mournful and sugary. Christian's face as he stood by and heard it upset Rosamund's gravity, and she turned her head to hide her smiles.

"Du lieber Himmel!" groaned Christian. "She is playing the accompaniment in E flat and singing the song in E natural."

The girl heard him, but did not seem put out. She finished stolidly, and then got up. Christian at once took her place. At first his fingers ran over the keys, trying the quality of the piano. Then he played a nocturne by Chopin that took Rosamund back to the moonlight and the forest. Then he began the accompaniment to *Garten*, by Richard Strauss, and signed to Rosamund to sing it. She had a pretty voice, and, as Christian had taught her, you may be sure she sang correctly and without affectation. He did not praise her when she had finished, so she knew he was satisfied. Christian's pupils heard of it when he was not satisfied.

But the English girl had annoyed him while Rosamund sang by talking to one of her cousins about blouses. He heard Rosamund, but he also heard that "she had just sent to London for Well-don's Blouse Number, and that she meant to make that blue muslin with gaugings and vandykes of lace," etc.

"Fräulein," said Christian, turning in his chair, "if you will give us the pleasure again of singing a song in one key while you play the accompaniment in another, I will tell Fräulein Elsler how many buttons there are on my new coat."

He waited a moment for the astonished girl to

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reply, then turned back and crashed into Liszt's arrangement of the *Erlkönig*. When he finished he had Rosamund only for an audience.

"One of them said you must be a genius, you were so rude," she told him sadly; "and the mother said you might be a genius, but that you were not a gentleman."

"It's not my *métier* in life to be a gentleman," said Christian. "I'm a musician, and I don't want to hear a little goose chatter about blouses while I'm at the piano. She was rude first. Now I will play you the prelude to *Parsifal*, and then we will go back to your aunt, or she will be angry with us both."

But if Betty felt anger, she did not show it to Christian. She received him amiably, and asked him if he would like a long forest drive next day.

"I like anything . . . except bad music," he said.

For the next ten days it really seemed as if he liked anything and any one, but perhaps Rosamund best of all. He went for walks and drives with both ladies, and he sat on the terrace or the veranda with them and their friends. He got on excellently well with Major Vollmar and Herr Lübeck. They said he was delightful company. Besides, he seemed to approve of their attentions to Betty, and to share in their admiration of her. Sometimes the three men played skat, while the ladies brought out their bits of embroidery; sometimes the party of five went for long expeditions. Once, when it rained, Christian got up an impromptu concert, with every one in the hotel as audience or performers. He had made friends long since with the English family, who were not quite sure yet that he was a gentleman, but as sure as they could be of his genius, and rather proud than otherwise of his acquaintance. He even let the

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singing girl sing at his concert, but he coached her for an hour beforehand, and she said afterwards that he had frightened her out of her wits, and taught her more than she had ever learnt before. He was rather proud of her himself, because she sang three parts of a song in tune. She told Rosamund that they called him the Viking, because he was so big and fierce and fair, and Rosamund perceived that all five young ladies were ready to fall a little in love with him, whether he was a gentleman or not. In fact, Christian became the centre of things in Obermatt, just as he was the centre of things in Fichtenstadt, and it was done without desire or effort on his part. He had come for rest and change, and he did not seek to please people or to consort with many. But he attracted nearly every one by his good-humour and his vitality. Two or three people, however, said he had the manners of a bear. For instance, an inquisitive lady called Fräulein Plötz questioned Christian one day about his relations with Rosamund, and complained afterwards of his curt replies.

"I only asked him if the girl had money of her own, and whether he considered her ripe for marriage," she said. "I don't know why he should have snapped my head off as he did. They are always together. What are we given eyes and tongues for, I should like to know? Not to bury in a napkin!"

"But I don't feel at all sure whether it is the aunt or the niece," said some one else. "He is attentive to both."

"You mean they are attentive to him," said Fräulein Plötz.

Her very knitting-needles sounded venomous as she clicked them, and when Christian passed her he looked the other way. It did not surprise him to

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find that people were hatching theories about his relations with Betty and Rosamund, but it did not weigh on his mind much either. He did not know that some of these silly people said a word or sent a glance and a smile to the girl now and then that gave her ardent hope the support of public expectation. As the days went on, she hardly knew what to hope or expect. It seemed hardly possible for a man to show a girl greater affection than Christian showed her; but his manner was just as intimate and tender before others as it was when they were by themselves, and so was his speech. He seemed to be a little on his guard when they were by themselves. Her coiffure and her gowns had certainly done a good deal for her, but not what she expected. He still treated her as a child, even on her nineteenth birthday, when he brought her roses and wished her many happy returns. Betty gave her niece a feather fan, and produced it at the breakfast-table in the presence of Christian Witt.

"I suppose wherever you are you will go to balls next spring and want a fan," she said.

"I hope I shall be in Fichtenstadt next spring," said Rosamund, when she had admired the fan.

"You would be in England if you carried out your father's wishes," said Betty.

"But . . ." said Rosamund, and got no further.

Something in her aunt's manner—an absence of regret, perhaps—the suggestion that they might be parted, distressed the girl and startled her. She had put all thoughts of England out of her mind lately.

"England is a long way off, and so is next spring," said Christian. "Don't spoil the child's birthday by talking of them."

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"I enter my twentieth year to-day," said Rosamund.
"How can I be a child?"

"Don't remind me of it," said Christian. "Leave well alone."

"What are we going to do?" said Betty languidly.
"I suppose there must be a birthday celebration?"

"What would you like to do, Aunt Betty?" asked Rosamund.

Betty said she would like to find a shady seat in the forest and go to sleep; but as that was manifestly impossible, she proposed to drive to Niedermatt, go by train to Gross Laufenburg, stare at the rapids, sleep there, and come back next day.

"Could we stop at Säkkingen?" said Rosamund.
"It is on the way to Laufenburg."

"There is nothing to see at Säkkingen," said Betty; "I have been there."

"But there is the old church and Werner's tomb, and you can see the same bit of the river that Werner saw when the Rhine came up out of the water and talked to him. I have always wanted to see Säkkingen, and some day I mean to go to the Bodensee and find the Hohen Twiel."

"You must do that on your wedding journey," said Christian.

The colour flamed in Rosamund's cheeks at his words, although he spoke lightly and without personal emphasis. Betty stared at the girl, and Christian glanced at her as if she puzzled him.

"Shall we three be by ourselves to-day?" he said to Betty.

"I hope not," said Betty; "I am going to ask Major Vollmar to make a fourth. Herr Lübeck expects friends to-day."

In Christian's opinion ill-humour was the unpardon-

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able sin, and Betty was in an atrocious humour this morning.

"What is the matter with your aunt?" he said to Rosamund a little later. "Nothing pleases her the last few days. What have we done?"

Rosamund had a shrewd suspicion of what ailed her aunt and of what they had done, but she did not know how to explain it.

"Perhaps she has been a little bored by Major Vollmar lately," she said. "He is very tedious, but to-day I will talk more to him."

Christian laughed outright, and said that would not please the Major, and that Rosamund should not be sacrificed on her birthday. He sat on the terrace with his cigar and Henschel's time-tables, and Rosamund sat beside him. It was going to be a hot day, but at this height and at this early hour the air was fresh and pleasant still. Rosamund had put on her white delaine again, and she wore some of Christian's roses in her waistband. His jest about her wedding journey came into her mind, as she watched him study the time-tables. A little frown drew his brows together; his attention was fixed on the open page. What an enchantment a journey made with him would be—a journey to beautiful places, and with no third person to be out of humour, because they liked to be together! The thought flashed into Rosamund's mind and out again. She knew she ought not to give such an adventurous idea harbourage there, and she tried to fix her attention on something Christian was telling her about trains.

"We must start in half an hour," he said. "Can you be ready?"

"I can," said Rosamund. "I don't know about Aunt Betty."

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"Run and ask her," said he. "I'll find out about the carriage."

Rosamund did not go willingly, but she went. She instinctively avoided being alone with her aunt lately, and she hoped now to find her still downstairs, and to give her Christian's message in the presence of other people. But Betty was in her own room.

"Well?" she said, when her niece entered.

"Could you be ready in half an hour, Aunt Betty?" she asked.

"I could, but I don't mean to be. I have ordered the carriage in time to catch the three o'clock train."

"Herr Witt says that if we take the earlier one we can have a few hours at Säkkingen."

"I don't want a minute there. I told you so this morning. You and Christian never think of any one but yourselves. But you won't get me into that hole to-day. We shall have thunder before long."

Rosamund could not dispute her aunt's decision, but she looked rather dejected as she gave the message to Christian Witt. He immediately looked as if he meant to carry his point.

"Get your bag and wait here for me," he said. "The carriage will be round in a few minutes."

He went off, as Rosamund surmised, to see her aunt, and he came striding back with his own bag in his hand just as the carriage drew up in front of the hotel. "Get in," he said to the girl, and they were driving off before she had time to ask any questions.

"It's all right," said Christian. "Your aunt was quite willing that we should go to Säkkingen. She is coming on later with Major Vollmar."

Although Rosamund hardly knew the ways of the world yet, it struck her that the hotel guests might well open their eyes at seeing her drive off with one

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young man, and her aunt a little later in the day with another. When they went four or five together, it seemed, somehow, different. But the arrangement was made by her elders, and had the merit of being pleasant. In fact, it promised to foreshadow that longer journey she had just imagined and desired. She enjoyed every stage of it: the drive through the woods of Obermatt, and then the train journey to Säkkingen, the sleepy little town that lies like a sack in the midst of the Rhine, and has an Irishman for patron saint, where the Bettys of the world find "nothing to see," and where more imaginative people see in every stone the story and the poem of the Trumpeter. They looked at the church and at Werner's grave, and they drove to the little mountain lake where the Trumpeter went fishing one May morning with a picnic party, as various and cheerful as the Canterbury pilgrims. Then they came back to the inn, still called the Knopf, and had dinner on a terrace overlooking the Rhine. By this time the heat and closeness of the day had grown intense. When they came out into the market-place after dinner, the town seemed to be asleep. No one was about, and the very dogs hardly raised their heads as Christian and Rosamund made their way across the sun-baked cobble-stones. The troops of children playing there in the morning had vanished, the sky hung leaden overhead; and though the sunshine had gone, the air was hotter than ever.

"We shall hardly get to the station dry," said Christian. "If you want photographs you must be quick."

As he spoke, the lightning flashed across their eyes, and was followed the next moment by a crash of thunder. It was going to be a heavy storm.

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"Run to the station as hard as you can," said Christian. "You know the way. I'll get some photographs and come after you."

"Never mind about them," began Rosamund, but he signed to her impatiently to do as she was told, and not waste time in discussion; for the lightning came every moment now, and the thunder with it. They were in the heart of the storm. Rosamund ran as hard as she could towards the cover of the station. It had turned so dark that when she got inside she could distinguish no one at first, but a good many people were either waiting or taking shelter there. Then a vivid flash of lightning turned night to day for an instant, and a tall Englishman saw Rosamund's face by it and came towards her. As he held out his hand the lightning flashed between them again.

"Mr. Dacre!" she cried in surprise.

"I sent you a wire," he said. "I suppose you started early."

"But are you on your way to Obermatt?"

"Yes . . . from Constance. I've been taking my sister to Switzerland."

He looked round for Frau Elsler.

"Where is your aunt?" he said.

"We are going to meet her at Gross Laufenburg," said Rosamund.

"We?"

"Herr Witt is here. You remember him?"

"Perfectly. But where is Herr Witt?"

At this moment Christian appeared, running headlong through the heavy rain now falling. He thrust a parcel of photographs into Rosamund's hands, grunted with discomfort, and began to shake himself like a huge wet dog.

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"Take care!" cried Rosamund, snatching her gown out of danger.

"How d'ye do, Herr Witt," said Dacre.

The two men shook hands cordially. They were quite inclined to like each other. Rosamund could not discover from her guardian's manner whether he was scandalised to find her here with the musician. He showed neither surprise nor displeasure at present; but when Christian went forward to take their tickets for Gross Laufenburg, Dacre said he would take one too.

"How surprised Aunt Betty will be to see you!" said Rosamund.

"Is she there by herself?" asked Dacre.

"I believe Major Vollmar was to go with her," said Rosamund vaguely, feeling this admission an uncomfortable one. She stole a glance at Dacre's face to see how it affected him, and found again that he did not reveal his thoughts as simply as she did herself.

"We are enjoying ourselves very much at Obermatt," she added.

"So it appears," said Dacre.

XIII

BETTY met them on the old roofed-in wooden bridge that crosses the Rhine between the twin towns of Gross and Klein Laufenburg. She was alone, and she greeted Dacre as if she was pleased to see him.

"I opened your telegram to Rosamund, so I knew you were somewhere about," she said. "But I hardly expected you to be clever enough to turn up here. Major Vollmar was hindered at the last

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moment. Now we are a party of four again. I detest three. One is always in the way. I am sure you and Rosamund must have a great deal to say to each other. How did you like New York? Have you brought back a millionaire's daughter? Not? What a strange Englishman! I thought New York was exclusively peopled by millionaires' daughters and policemen with clubs. Nothing has happened to us since you went away except that we are both six months older . . . and wiser. Six months may change your opinions more than they change the fashions. You wear the same sleeves, but you don't like the same people. Rosamund has quite grown up, you perceive. Should you have known her if you had met her unexpectedly? You did, you say? But you knew we were in this neighbourhood. To-day is her birthday, and she had set her romantic little heart on seeing the Trumpeter's tomb. So Herr Witt sacrificed himself in spite of the heat. I told them they would be caught in a thunderstorm. Did the tomb come up to your expectations, child, and did you shed a few tears on it?"

Rosamund thought that everything was turning out uncomfortably to-day. She did not know how to answer her aunt's badinage without betraying that she did not like it. So she smiled as amiably as she could and said nothing. Christian had gone on ahead to order coffee, and when they all sat down to it Betty managed to sit beside him. Before long she proposed that Dacre should take Rosamund for a stroll.

"I am tired," said Rosamund, looking up from her photographs. "We walked about a good deal at Säkkingen."

"Very well," said Betty, and she turned to

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Christian. "Come and see the old town before it is dark," she said.

He made no objection, and Rosamund watched them wistfully as they went off together.

"Don't you want to see the town?" she said to Dacre.

"I am in no hurry. I have come to Germany to see you. How have you been getting on?"

"Very well."

"Have you had a pleasant summer so far?"

"Yes."

"You are not ready to come to England yet?"

The girl looked up from her photographs, her eyes dilated with alarm and surprise.

"How can I come now that my uncle is dead?" she said. "I thought I was safe."

Dacre made no direct answer, but he took a small leather case from his pocket and placed it before her.

"I remembered it was your birthday," he said. "I ordered this for you before I went away."

Rosamund opened the case, and saw an admirably executed miniature of her father, set round with pearls, and hanging as a pendant from a fine gold chain. Both pleasure and remembrance were in her eyes as she thanked him.

"I am not doing as he wished," she said a little later. "He told you I was to go to England."

"That is what I desire to arrange," said Dacre.

Rosamund pushed back her chair and rose from the table.

"Shall we go and look at the town?" she said.

"I thought you were tired."

"I am rested now."

Gross Laufenburg consists of two streets of crazy

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houses straggling up a hill to a ruined fortress and an old church on the top. It faces Klein Laufenburg, and between the two towns the Rhine rushes headlong over the great rocks that break it into rapids. The hills all round are covered with forest, and are dwarf and smooth. But though the scene spread before Rosamund offered none of the sensational effects the world rushes in crowds to see, she turned again and again to look at it with pleasure. The upper reach of the river flowed quietly towards the boulders that were to dash it into fury, the roar of the broken waters made a deep sonorous accompaniment to the clatter of village life, and the steep, uneven street was busy with troops of flaxen-haired children come out at sundown to play.

"I have never seen anything so pretty," said Rosamund; "but, then, I have not travelled much. I should like to see the whole world."

"I thought you were tied to Fichtenstadt."

"My affections are, of course. I should like to have a home in Fichtenstadt, and money enough to go away from home sometimes."

As Rosamund spoke, Betty and Christian came up to them, and stopped to compare impressions.

"I've seen all I want to," said Betty. "I detest children and cobblestones."

"I wish I could photograph some of these old houses," said Rosamund.

"They want a regiment of charwomen," said Betty, who held her skirts very high.

"I should like to see the place by moonlight," said her niece.

"The moon is full to-night," said Christian.

"But we shall not be up when it rises," said Betty. "I have had enough already of a long, tiring, tire-

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some day. Perhaps to-morrow will be more agreeable."

"What has made to-day tiresome?" inquired Christian, as he walked back to the hotel beside her.

"Your behaviour this morning," she said promptly. "What business had you to carry off my niece in full view of the hotel? What do you suppose all the old tabbies are saying about you by this time?"

"How can it matter what they say?"

"I told you to wait for the three o'clock train."

"You did nothing of the kind," said Christian indignantly. "You told me to do as I liked, and shut the door because you were in a draught. I can't think what has happened to you this week. Instead of being always in a good humour, you are always in a bad one. Why couldn't you come to Säkkingen with us?"

Betty changed the subject, and during supper made herself sufficiently agreeable. But when ten o'clock came she vowed she could not keep her eyes open another minute, and carried Rosamund off to bed. The two ladies had small adjoining rooms on the ground floor, and sleepy as Betty professed herself to be, she went into Rosamund's room and sat down on the sofa. It was the first time that the aunt and the niece had been by themselves since the morning. After supper, when they had all four gone to the Laufenplatz to look at the rapids, Rosamund had said she would like to see Gross Laufenburg from the opposite bank, and Christian had straightway taken her there across the wooden bridge. The girl had come back from this stroll with her eyes shining, but she did not know how her face betrayed her to the older woman, or what anger and jealousy she excited. She guessed, however, the moment her

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aunt sat down that she was in for a bad quarter of an hour.

"I am glad that Mr. Dacre has come," said Betty.

Rosamund sat down on the only chair in the room. She had been so happy that she did not feel ready for the counterblast.

"I don't suppose he will stay long," she said.

"I wonder what he thought when he met you at Säkkingen with Christian Witt?"

"He said nothing about it."

"I shall have to say something to him; otherwise he will think your behaviour has my approval."

"But you did consent, didn't you? Herr Witt ran upstairs to fetch you, and then he came down alone and bundled me into the carriage, and said . . ."

Betty put out her hands as if to check such a torrent of words.

"You are not going to tell me you were unwilling to go?" she said.

Rosamund flushed at the derision in her aunt's tone.

"I thought . . ." she began.

"You don't think," interrupted Betty; "you act on impulse. A man soon finds out when a girl has no dignity of conduct, and then he amuses himself. It was just the same after supper, when you said you wanted to go across the bridge and Herr Witt offered to take you. He was longing to sit still and smoke and talk. That kind of thing makes a girl a bore."

"I don't believe he thought it a bore," said poor Rosamund unwisely. "He would have stayed over there longer, but I said you would expect me back."

Betty shrugged her shoulders airily, and got up to go.

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"Of course, he is an old hand," she said, "on to-day and off to-morrow. You'll find out before you've done with him. You might as well set your heart on the moon. But in future you must please behave."

She nodded at Rosamund as if she had recovered her usual indifferent good-humour, and went out of the room. She had performed an unpleasant duty effectively, and she said to herself that she had only spoken the truth. Christian Witt was a notorious heart-breaker, and Rosamund's name ought not to be coupled with his, unless he meant to marry her. Betty did not think this likely, but she was prepared to make sure by the simple expedient of asking him. If that did not cause Christian to ride away, Betty said to herself, she did not know her man.

Meanwhile Rosamund sat by her open window, and took no further step towards undressing. She saw herself with Christian in the carriage, in the train, in the sleepy streets of Säkkingen; she saw the flash of lightning that seemed, with its own swiftness, to bring Dacre into her life again. Then a long, flat, disappointing afternoon led at last to the evening, when Christian had taken her across the old bridge and drawn her arm through his because she stumbled over a stone. Arm in arm they had walked together under a sky that was moonlit, though the moon had not risen yet. He had called her child, and told her she must not go to England because he would miss her. He had not declared himself her lover, but she thought he might do so any day. It would be terrible to go into exile before he spoke. She could not feel sure that he would follow her, or that his love was of a kind to surmount difficulties. She did not know that he loved her at all. She only hoped it

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very innocently and ardently, and she wished, with all the impatience of youth, that he would say so, to her first and then to all the world.

She sat longer than she knew at her open window, fretting and dreaming by turns. While she sat there the moon came sailing into the sky; its pure light filled the room, and Christian Witt, stealing close to the window, saw her radiant figure in it. She heard his approach, quiet as it was, and started at the sound of his voice.

"Hush!" he said, "come out with me and see the moonlight on the rapids. Your aunt is safe in bed, I suppose?"

Rosamund looked at the full moon, and looked at Christian Witt. His mischievous blue eyes were full of fun rather than of sentiment, but he had thought of her and come for her. Of course, it was not behaving well to go with him, but the spirit that had led her to eat Beate Rassmann's bread in a drawing-lesson still lived in Rosamund, and occasionally broke out. When people expected her to be naughty she felt inclined to fulfil their expectations. Besides, the next moment might bring the crisis of her life and a happy ending to her troubles. The window was hardly three feet from the ground. She got on to the sill, and just as she was going to jump, Christian lifted her gently to the ground. They stole away together before they spoke.

"Of course, I ought not to have come," said Rosamund.

"Why not?" said Christian.

"But it is so beautiful that I shall never forget it," said Rosamund, when they were standing together on the Laufenplatz. The moonlit waters foamed beneath them, and the twin towns were asleep. No

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sounds reached them except the thunder of the rapids and the murmur of their own voices.

"I came out here after you went to bed, and when the moon rose and turned the whole place silver I thought I'd just see if you were up still."

"It was very kind of you," said Rosamund. She was conscious of a slight sense of disappointment. Christian's tone was friendly, but it was matter-of-fact, and therefore out of tune with her mood and with the silver, romantic hour.

"This great volume of water makes it chilly," said Christian. "We mustn't stand here long."

"But after the heat and dust of the day the cool air is delicious," said Rosamund. "It rests you, and the night gives you time to think."

"You looked as if you had the world to think of when I saw you sitting in the moonlight just now."

"Aunt Betty is angry with me. Sometimes . . . I almost think . . . she is tired of me."

"Quite likely," said Christian. "She is as changeable as a barometer."

"But I have no one else," said Rosamund, her heart sinking with dismay.

"You have Mr. Dacre . . . and many friends."

"I have no friends . . . only acquaintances. And what is Mr. Dacre to me? He cannot replace Aunt Betty."

"Life will bring others," said Christian. "There is plenty of time."

That was just what Rosamund could not believe. Her lip trembled slightly, and she turned her face from the man at her side and hung over the railing guarding her from the waters.

"I don't want to go to England," she said.

"I hope it will not be necessary," said Christian.

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"I could not be happy there."

"Why not?"

Rosamund stared at the torrent and did not speak. How could she be happy in England when Christian was in Germany? and how could he ask her a question that should have found an answer in his heart? She did not know that his eyes were gravely watching her, and that his brows were gathered together in a little frown of trouble and perplexity.

"Come," he said a moment later. "If your aunt had a fancy to see the moon, and met us here, we should get a scolding."

Rosamund walked with him in silence. When silence grew oppressive Christian began to talk about the constellations, for it was a night of stars. But the girl's voice was lifeless as she answered him.

"You may as well get in at your window," said Christian. "The front-door will be locked by this time."

They arrived at the window as Christian spoke, and they both stared at it in blank amazement. Some one had shut it and drawn the blind. The light was still burning inside the room.

XIV

"SAPERLOT!" said Christian, and he looked at the window as Rosamund had seen him look at the English girl who sang out of tune, with an expression of despair that had a twinkle of amusement in it.

"Who can have done it?" said Rosamund. "The door was shut. Besides, the chambermaid . . ."

"Which is your aunt's window?" said Christian.

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"It lies between rousing her and rousing the Hausknecht."

"Oh, don't let it be my aunt!" said Rosamund.

She felt that it was really impossible to stand there in the moonlight with Christian and invite her aunt to rise from sleep and let them in.

"Come along, then," said Christian; "we must brave the Hausknecht."

They had to ring twice before any one came; but Christian tipped the sleepy man they had disturbed, and borrowed his light to take Rosamund to her room. They trod as softly as they could, and Christian left her before she opened the door. She could still hear his step in the corridor when she turned the handle, and she uttered a little cry of distress and surprise as she saw her aunt sitting there with a lighted candle and a French novel on the table in front of her. For a moment her courage failed her either to go in or run away.

"Well," said Betty, "have you enjoyed yourself?"

Rosamund shrank from the derision and dislike in her aunt's manner, but she went a little further into the room and shut the door.

"Why are you waiting up for me?" she asked.

Betty raised her eyebrows.

"I came in to tell you something about our arrangements for to-morrow. I found you gone. What was I to do—go to bed and never trouble whether you came back or not?"

"You might have known I should come back. I have only been for a walk."

"By yourself? At this time of night?"

"No," said Rosamund, assuming a courage she was very far from feeling. "I went with Herr Witt.

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He saw me sitting at my window, and asked me to go and see the moonlight on the rapids."

"How conveniently these things happen!"

"Why did you shut the window, Aunt Betty?"

"Because I felt cold."

It seemed to Rosamund that they had reached a deadlock. She went to the glass and took off her hat, and wondered whether she could say she was sorry. She thought she could not. Rivalry in love sweeps away differences in age and position; and Rosamund understood that her aunt was angry with her, not because she had gone out at night, but because she had gone with Christian Witt. Yet the girl knew she had laid herself open to reproof, and she wondered what Dacre would say when he was told of this escapade. Presently she heard a slight rustle from the sofa, and turning round, she saw that her aunt had shut her book and was about to go.

"Good-night," said Betty.

"Good-night," said Rosamund.

"I suppose I may trust you to keep your window shut till to-morrow, or have you a fancy to go walking again?"

"I am going straight to bed."

"Pleasant dreams," said Betty, and went out of the room.

Next morning when Rosamund got up she had hardly slept at all. She had been fretting over the peril that threatened her relations with Christian, threatened the indeterminate, delightful intimacy that might still develop or might collapse at a rough touch like a house of cards. She knew, of course, that her anxiety was indecorous. Polite society decrees that it is the man, and not the maid, who should adore and feel uncertain of success. But

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Rosamund might as well have tried to change her skin as her heart just then, the heart that beat for Christian Witt, and thought a future without him would be dust and ashes. She felt sure that her aunt had not said the last word either to her or to her fellow-sinner. Rosamund dressed early and went into the Speise Saal, hoping that her lucky star would bring Christian there before the others.

But Christian had been up and dressed earlier still. He had gone out on the bridge for a breath of air, and, to his surprise, Betty had joined him there, and had proposed to get their morning coffee at the inn on the other side instead of in their own hotel.

It seemed an unsociable plan, and he said so, but Betty assured him that the others would not be up yet.

"Mr. Dacre keeps English hours," she said. "He probably considers half-past eight early. And Rosamund was late last night, wasn't she?"

"I suppose you shut the window?"

"Yes," said Betty, "I shut the window."

"Why did you do it? We left it open on purpose. You gave us the trouble of knocking up the Hausknecht."

"I am afraid that is not the only trouble that will come of yesterday's doings," said Betty.

"What do you mean?"

"You seem to forget that my niece is a young woman . . . a marriageable young woman."

"She is a child," said Christian.

"Is that all you have to say?" inquired Betty.

"I have nothing to say. I never feel inclined for conversation in the morning. One wants one's coffee and a smoke. There is an inn with a little garden. Will that do? Though why we should

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come over here and drink bad coffee when we are sure of good in our own hotel . . .”

Betty perceived that for once even Christian could be out of humour, but she was not astonished or disturbed. She had a shrewd suspicion that his conscience was not as easy as he made it out to be, and that just suited her purpose. They sat down in the little garden and had their breakfast served there. The coffee and rolls were good. Betty talked of indifferent trifles, and Christian felt happier, and was lighting his cigar, when she ruffled him again.

“Well?” she said, and she pulled back her chair a little so that she could have a better view of him.

“Do you want to go?” he said, offering to get up. But that manoeuvre did not help him.

“I want to stay here and talk to you,” she said. “I want to know what you mean to do about Rosamund.”

“Need I do anything? We are all very happy as we are.”

“You mean you are happy. I am not, because I am full of anxiety about my niece. As for the girl herself, she is living in a fool's paradise. Of course, she believes you mean to marry her.”

“I should be sorry for that,” said Christian.

His conscience pricked him, for he had suspected lately how things were with Rosamund, and since last night he had felt sure. The discovery had not weighed on his mind much, because all the year round women were losing their hearts to him, and, so far as he knew, were little the worse for it. His absurd experiences had led him to take love in real life for a trivial passion lightly come and lightly gone. It was only in music that he could understand love's

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tragedy. But Rosamund was a charming child, and he would not for the world have given her pain.

"All through the spring and summer you have singled out the girl," said Betty. "You have haunted my house."

"Not more than before."

"My niece was not there before. Every one in Fichtenstadt was talking of your infatuation and wondering what you saw in her. You have been her only admirer."

"I am not her admirer in your sense of the word," said Christian. "I have never said a word to the child any one might not hear."

"I am not a court of law or a fool," said Betty. "Half the love and half the mischief made in the world is made without words. Why did you follow her when I took her away?"

"What will you say next? It was always understood that I should meet you at Obermatt. Didn't I come to Axenstein last year, and to Ostend the year before?"

"My niece was not with me then," said Betty calmly. "This year she is, and you have devoted yourself to her instead of me. The whole hotel saw you drive off together yesterday. Fräulein Plötz was quite excited about it. Mr. Dacre found you together at Säkkingen. I have not told him yet that she gets out of her bedroom window by night to go for walks with you. No doubt he would send her to England at once; but what would he think of her?"

Christian pushed his chair back roughly, muttered something rude and inarticulate about women all the world over, and beckoned to the waitress, who stood a little way off. While he paid, Betty put on her gloves, and looked urbanely at the landscape.

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"The best thing I can do is to go away," growled Christian when they were by themselves again.

"It comes to that," said Betty, "unless you mean to get married."

"Such an idea has never entered my head."

"I was afraid not. Poor little Rose thing! But she will soon get over it."

"Do you think she will?" said Christian, trying to feel as gratified as he ought.

"Oh dear, yes!" said Betty briskly. "A girl of that age is like a puppy feeling its teeth . . . anything serves its purpose. If you take away your boot it turns its attention to a chair leg."

"Then I wonder you felt so anxious about her," said Christian.

"I am not at all anxious now that you are going away," said Betty. "But people are so meddling and ill-natured. You know it doesn't do to have a girl talked about."

"Of course not," said Christian with vehemence. "I am very fond of the child. I would not hurt her in any way for the world. But I hope she won't misunderstand my going off so suddenly."

"After all, you mean her to understand that you are not going to marry her," said Betty.

Christian got up from his chair as if Betty was a wasp and stung him, but he had nothing to say. He marched across the wooden bridge beside her without speaking or even looking her way. When they got back to the hotel they found Rosamund and Dacre at breakfast, and they sat down at the same table and explained where they had been. Rosamund looked anxiously at Christian, and wondered what her aunt had said to him. He was silent and preoccu-

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pied, and he avoided her eyes. She turned suddenly to Dacre.

"Do you know what I did last night?" she said.

"Do you mean after you bid me good-night, or before?" he asked.

"Oh, long after! I got out of my window . . ."

Dacre put down his cup and looked at Rosamund with the horror and amazement expected of him. But she saw an encouraging twinkle in his eye.

"You'll have to go to school again," he said.

"And I walked about in the moonlight with Herr Witt, and we looked at the rapids. As you are my guardian, I thought you ought to know."

"I should think so, indeed, and, as your guardian, I'm scandalised."

"Rosamund has never done such a thing before," said Betty. "She usually has some sense of propriety."

"I never slept in a ground-floor room before," said Rosamund.

"It is the window that makes your behaviour so shocking," said Dacre, as he buttered his roll. "If you had said you wanted to see the moonlight, and had just walked out of a door with Herr Witt or me . . . even if it had been a back-door . . ."

He was suddenly checked by Christian Witt, who, to his surprise, seized his hand and shook it with great cordiality.

"I hope we shall meet again," said the musician. "You seem to be a sensible man. I liked you the first time I spoke to you . . . at the Freemasons' Ball. Do you remember?"

"Perfectly," said Dacre, his amused glance encountering Rosamund's, and reminding her of her own adventures at the Freemasons' Ball.

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"Well, good-bye," said Christian, getting up suddenly. "If I am to reach St. Blasien to-night, I must make a start. I'm not a quick walker. I hope we shall meet in Fichtenstadt, Mr. Dacre. Auf Wiedersehen, Frau Doctor."

Rosamund was in the act of lifting her cup to her lips, and the start of surprise she could not quite restrain spilt a few drops of coffee on her pretty gown. She did not drink. She set down the cup as quickly as she could and looked at Christian.

"I have said Auf Wiedersehen to your aunt," said Christian, "but what am I to say to you? Is it to be good-bye?"

"Why should it be?" said Rosamund.

"If you go to England? If you are to live in England?"

Rosamund drew herself up, and as far as she could make it so, her face was expressionless. She behaved very well, but the sudden shock affected her voice as a sudden wind affects a little flame. All life, all glow, had gone out of it.

"Good-bye, then," she said.

XV

It was afternoon at Obermatt. The long mid-day dinner was over, and the long siesta of recovery that followed it. Betty's eyes looked as fresh as her toilet when she appeared on the terrace again, and went up to Dacre, who was sitting by himself. He rose as she approached, and offered her a chair, but she did not take it.

"I'm going for a stroll in the forest," she said.

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"Then I'll come too," said Dacre, keeping at her side. "But where is Rosamund?"

"I have not seen her since dinner. She told me she had a headache and meant to lie down."

"I thought there must be something the matter with her," said Dacre, relieved to hear that the girl's silence and look of misery had a physical cause.

"She has dreadful headaches sometimes. This path leads to a seat with a pleasant view."

"Wouldn't it do Rosamund good to come with us?"

"No," said Betty. "When she has this kind of headache she likes to be left alone."

Dacre understood corals better than he did women. Betty he did not understand at all. He found it difficult to reconcile the Professor's dislike and distrust of her with his own impressions of an adroit woman, with a refreshing gleam of irony in her eyes. She walked as daintily as a cat. She was a contrast to most of her countrywomen, because from her hat to her shoes she was invariably well groomed, and when she chose she had amiable manners. In short, when Dacre was with Betty she entertained him, and when they were not together he had his doubts of her.

"I have appointed a fresh trustee in the place of Dr. Arden," he began, when they had found the seat with the view. They had it to themselves, and the hour and the place seemed to encourage the discussion of business.

"You didn't think of appointing me?" said Betty.

"No. I went straight to Herr Richter . . . at least, I wrote to him."

Betty laughed lightly, and caught at the ends of her long feather stole that fluttered in the breeze.

"He can't offer Rosamund a home," she said.

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"Her money affairs are simple enough. What she wants just now is a home."

Dacre felt surprised, almost disconcerted. He had come to Germany to separate two women who wished to remain together, and the last thing he expected was to be met half-way. The mental effect was rather like finding level ground where you have looked for a step.

"Of course, the Professor meant her to find a home with her uncle," he said.

"The Professor was an idiot!" said Betty.

Dacre watched Betty's fluttering feathers flying out in front of her, and she watched his dark, strong face with a look of amusement on her own.

"You don't know what to do with the girl, do you?" she said cheerfully. "Her father should have left her in my care, then it would have been my duty to look after her. Now it is my duty to let her go. I have never known a greater idiot than the Professor. He couldn't bear me."

"Why not?" said Dacre, thinking the lady's explanation might be illuminating. But it was not.

"Why doesn't a terrier like a cat?" she asked. "You can't reason about a prejudice. If I had been a saint Ulrich would have thought me a sinner. As a matter of fact, I'm like most people, neither one nor the other. I should need to be a saint to forgive the slight put on me. The whole town knows I was passed over for you. And what has come of my clever brother-in-law's arrangement? Here is Rosamund at nineteen with about as much sense and *savoir vivre* as a child in the nursery . . . and here are you, a young unmarried man and a foreigner, with the control of her affairs. It is downright

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crazy. . . . There isn't a woman in the empire who would have shown as little practical insight."

"Professor Elsler wished his daughter to live in England," said Dacre. "You seem to forget that he was taken by surprise. He had no time to consult with Dr. Arden and find out what he could do for Rosamund."

"Well, what are you going to do?" said Betty. "How do you propose to get her to England? I should like to hear what your plans are for her."

"I must talk to Rosamund before I can tell you."

"Then you had better talk to her soon. I have found it inconvenient to have my only spare room occupied for six months."

Dacre was considerably taken aback by the lady's hurry and by her businesslike tone.

"I thought you had offered Rosamund a home for life," he said. "I thought that you were devoted to each other."

Betty fixed her bright blue eyes on him, and he saw no compunction in them.

"Souvent femme varie, Folle qui s'y fie!" she cried; and she vouchsafed no further explanation just then. "I'm going to find Rosamund," she added, laughing openly now at his grave face. "If her head is better, I'll send her to talk to you."

She did not wait for his answer, but picked up her skirts and walked briskly back to the hotel. On her way she met Major Vollmar and Herr Lübeck, who complained bitterly of her two days' desertion of them. She restored their spirits without delaying her own progress for a moment, and, with one on either side of her, arrived on the terrace, where at this hour of the afternoon a good many people were assembled. But Rosamund was nowhere to be seen, and when Betty

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had pacified her companions by promising to return shortly and drink coffee in their society, she smiled at them gaily and went to look for her niece in the hotel.

"Eine schneidige Frau," said the Major, watching her trim figure across the veranda.

"Eine reizende Frau," said Herr Lübeck, for they were both quite overcome by Betty's charms, and thought seriously of marriage.

Dacre's sudden appearance disturbed them. "What has he come for?" they asked each other, driven into friendliness by the unexpected advent of a rival.

"He is not my idea of a handsome man," said Herr Lübeck, taking out his pocket mirror and looking at his own florid attractions with complacency.

"Some women might consider him so," said the Major, who was dark and spare himself, and privately thought Herr Lübeck vulgar.

Meanwhile, Betty had knocked at Rosamund's door and gained admittance. The girl sat drooping in one corner of the sofa, and she had been crying. She had not changed her gown or touched her hair since dinner, and when the door opened she looked up wearily, as if she wished she might have been left alone. But Betty sat down in the other corner of the sofa, and as she did so she observed some faded roses on the table in front of her niece.

"Why don't you throw them away?" she said. "I hate the sight of dead flowers."

There was a mischievous gleam in her eyes as she spoke, and she put out her hand towards the flowers. But Rosamund intercepted her.

"I want them," she said.

"You want dead flowers? What an odd taste! Why not a little stale fish or fruit to keep with them?"

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Where do they come from? Surely they are the roses Christian gave you yesterday morning. The heat has killed them."

Rosamund did not speak. She wished she had hidden her flowers before her aunt took her by surprise.

"Why have you shut yourself up here?" continued Betty. "Is there anything wrong—toothache or headache?"

"I am coming down now that it is cooler."

"You want a brush-up. In fact, you ought to change your gown. That coffee-stain shows on the front breadth. How did you manage that spill? I saw you jump when Christian said he was not coming back with us. Now, if you had put faith in me, you would have expected something of the sort. I told you he was like artists the world over . . . here one day, off the next. Those charmers are always fickle."

"This room is very close," said Rosamund, getting up and going towards the open window. "I'll come out of doors now."

But on the way from the window she passed a mirror and caught sight of her tear-stained face and dishevelled hair. She had not known that she looked like this.

"Put on your black voile," said Betty decisively. "It suits you. You must be quick, because Mr. Dacre is waiting. I promised to send you to him."

"Why?"

Betty was slowly stroking her chin with the soft ends of her feather boa, and she watched her niece reflectively.

"You see, I've been talking to him out there," she said. "He is on the seat in the forest with a view of

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the Alps, the one you and Christian used to take. We have been discussing your future."

"What was there to discuss?"

"Mr. Dacre must tell you. By your father's will I have no jurisdiction over your affairs, and in my opinion we have disregarded his will long enough. At first I felt so sorry for you that I did not think of him. But now I consider that the time has come for a fresh start."

Rosamund had not stirred yet to brush her hair or change her gown. For weeks past she had suspected that her aunt wanted to be rid of her, but weeks of vague suspicion had not done much, it seemed, to lessen the shock. She stared at Betty with wide eyes that threatened tears, and, with a childish gesture, she put one hand to her throat as if to restrain the sobs rising there.

"Am I to leave Fichtenstadt?" she murmured.

"I suppose so," said Betty. "Anyhow, you are to leave me."

"But Mr. Dacre has the decision in his own hands. If we can persuade him to let me stay . . ."

"I have not tried to persuade him."

"Do you want me to go, then, Aunt Betty?"

"I want the spare room for other people sometimes. But that is not the main thing. Fichtenstadt is the worst place in the world for you just now, because of Christian Witt. The less you see of him for a time the better."

The colour flamed in Rosamund's cheeks, and she looked swiftly down.

"I asked him this morning if he meant to marry you," continued Betty, still caressing her chin with her feathers, and speaking in a matter-of-fact but pensive tone.

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But the girl sprang to her feet with a cry of rage and humiliation.

"After last night I considered it my duty," said Betty. "Some one had to point out his to him. But he has no idea of marrying any one at present. He likes you well enough, but he regards you as a child."

"You had no right!" stammered Rosamund—"you had no right! What can he think of me? I can never face him again."

"My dear child, you have made your own intentions sufficiently clear lately to him and to every one else. It was quite time to discover his. I'm sorry the result is not satisfactory, but anything is better for a girl than a long entanglement with some man who does not mean marriage. I dare say you feel annoyed with me now, but some day you will see the wisdom of what I have done and bless me."

"I will never forgive you," said Rosamund.

She had drawn herself up to her full height, and in spite of her rough hair and her tear-stained cheeks, she looked less of a child than usual. Her eyes were dark with wrath as she hastily pinned on her hat before a mirror, dabbed at her face with a wet sponge, and, taking no further thought for her appearance or notice of her aunt, went out of the room. Betty waited until she no longer heard the girl's step in the corridor, then she yawned, then she took out a pocket powder-puff and applied it in front of the mirror.

"You *have* been a long time," said the Major, when she appeared on the terrace. "Your coffee must be cold."

"What has become of my niece, I wonder?" she said. "Have you seen her about?"

"She passed a moment ago. She passed very

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quickly in that direction. But she will not find her friend there to-day."

"She will find Mr. Dacre," said Betty. "He is an older friend."

"Herr Witt did not bid us good-bye," said Herr Lübeck, who was rather inquisitive. "I made sure that he would return with you to-day. Hasn't he left some luggage here? I seem to remember a big portmanteau."

"It was rather sudden," said Betty, with her baffling smile. She drank a little coffee, and then she added: "The Grand Duke is devoted to Herr Witt. He often sends for him when he is out of spirits or harassed by affairs of State. He is Saul, you know, and Herr Witt is David and plays to him."

"Indeed," said Herr Lübeck, with ponderous respect and attention. He had told Betty only the day before that he was helping to form a philharmonic society in his own small town, and that he wanted a good conductor for six winter concerts. The small town was within an hour's journey of Fichtenstadt.

"The Grand Duke says that Christian Witt will be one of the greatest conductors in Germany," continued Betty. "In Fichtenstadt we live in dread of losing him to Bertholdsruhe."

"Is he with the Grand Duke now?" asked the Major.

"When he receives one of these sudden royal calls he never tells us till afterwards," said Betty. "He just vanishes."

"But what will happen to his portmanteau?" said Herr Lübeck. "I am sure there was a portmanteau. Shall I speak to the manager about it?"

"I did that directly I arrived," said Betty. "It

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will be sent to his Fichtenstadt address tomorrow."

"I wonder if he had his evening clothes here?" said Herr Lübeck. "I don't see how he could appear before the Grand Duke without them."

"I can relieve you on that score too," said Betty. "He had left his evening clothes in Fichtenstadt."

XVI

ROSAMUND'S world had gone to pieces, and she believed there was no help for her anywhere. She felt sore, forlorn, and broken-hearted. She could not think of any fate in history or romance as sad and humiliating as her own. Unhappy love has dignity and pathos. You bear it or you die. Love thwarted, love unreturned, love set too high, every form and issue of love unsatisfied, has its own place in love's tragedy and its own beauty. But to hear that the idol of your heart "likes you well enough, but does not mean to marry yet"; to see him stampede at the first meddlesome word; to receive his hurried adieux before an audience—these were offences no heroine known to Rosamund had ever been asked to endure or could conceivably survive. She believed that her love had turned in a flash to hatred, and her ardent desire was to meet Christian as soon as might be, and show him how little she cared. Her aunt she wished she need never see again.

As she hurried towards Dacre she wondered how she could best acquaint him with this new and distressing state of her affairs; how, in fact, she could tell him

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her story without speaking of the disappointing man on whom the story turned. For, child as she was, Rosamund had a shrewd suspicion of the truth. Her aunt's spare room would still be at her disposal if Christian had not made more of the niece than of the aunt of late. This element of rivalry only fixed her desire to have done with both. She could not stoop to a struggle for a man's affections. Besides, she no longer coveted Christian's love. Since he did not care for her, she vowed she would not care for him. Of course, her heart ached, but pride kept her head in the air. As Dacre rose to meet her he saw that her face was tense with anger. So was her voice and her slim, upright figure.

"Aunt Betty said you wanted me," she began.

"I hope it was convenient to you to come," he said urbanely.

Rosamund had hurried to him as a child who has been hurt hurries home. She knew he would help her if he could.

"I want to go away from here at once," she said.

"I want to get away from Aunt Betty."

"Why, Rosamund . . ." exclaimed Dacre, taken by surprise. "I thought that you were devoted to your aunt."

"Aunt Betty is very changeable. She seems to dislike me now. She has just told me she wants her spare room for other people. If I could, I would leave her this afternoon. But I don't know where to go. Where can I go, Mr. Dacre?"

"I don't think you can go anywhere this afternoon . . . by yourself . . . you know."

"But I must live somewhere . . . and as it happens, I am by myself now that I am given up by Aunt Betty. I am not going back to Fichtenstadt.

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At least, I should like to go there at once for about a week, and then I want to leave it for ever."

"I admit that you always know your own mind," said Dacre dryly, "but your mind changes. Last time I saw you, you were as determined to stay with your aunt as you are now to leave her."

"It is Aunt Betty who changes. Would you live another hour with some one who said openly she did not want you?"

"There can be no question of your leaving your aunt till we know what you are to do next, and that cannot be settled in an hour," said Dacre.

"Who is going to settle it?"

"I suppose I am . . . with your help."

Dacre was sitting back in one corner of the bench, and Rosamund sat with her face turned towards him. The burning anger in it was dying away already; her pretty mouth was set less rigidly, her voice had tears in it.

"What shall I do?" she said. "I want to get away. Shall I go to the Dorotheenstift?"

"Oh no," said Dacre.

She looked up, rather startled by the decision with which he spoke, and hardly knowing whether she felt more inclined to resent his tone of authority or see in it a refuge from her loneliness. She thought he seemed in an uncertain mood, as if he had an idea in his mind that he found it hard to express.

"Where are you going to live in future?" she asked.

"At home . . . at Ormathwaite."

"Does your sister live there now?"

"When she is at home; but she is often away. Otherwise there would have been no difficulty at all.

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You should have come straight to us for as long as you pleased."

"Oh," said Rosamund, her face kindling at the bare thought of such a solution, "I wish it had been possible. I did not like to say so, but I wish I could be somewhere within reach of you. At first, if I go to England, everything . . . every one will be so strange."

"Will you come to me, then?" said Dacre. "Your father wished it . . . and ever since you were a child I have wished it. But you are such a child still that I meant to wait a little. I am not sure that I ought to speak yet . . . but if you are lonely and unhappy . . . if you think you could be happy with me . . . as my wife . . ."

The man was deeply moved. The girl was taken by surprise and covered with sudden confusion. Her first impulse was to edge away; she stared as if she could hardly believe her ears, and then she looked down, because Dacre's eyes said more than his words, and they troubled her.

"Why do you say my father wished it?" she asked as soon as she could speak.

"Because he told me so."

Rosamund's mind was in a whirl. She tried to see all the issues of either course open to her. What would happen if she assented to Dacre's proposal? What would happen if she denied him? It never occurred to her to ask for time. Her thoughts flashed to and fro between yesterday and the morrow. Should she face the future as the Englishman's betrothed? Should she face it alone? The thought of her aunt's astonishment if she chose the first alternative encouraged her. So did the promise of startling Christian Witt. Then she tried to consider

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Dacre's point of view. She knew that it was not right for a girl to accept a man from motives of pique, and she wanted to do what was right. As she had successfully hardened her heart against Christian, she did not think she need say much about him. She really did not know what to say.

"Perhaps I ought not to have spoken yet," said Dacre anxiously. "Never mind, Rosamund; forget what I have said if it only troubles you. Perhaps some day later . . ."

"It is not exactly about myself that I am troubled," said Rosamund. "I think I know my own mind. The moment you mentioned the possibility of my living with you and your sister I could have jumped for joy. But, of course, it never entered my head that you would ask me to come in this way. I should as soon have thought of marrying the man in the moon as you."

"I am a good deal older than you . . ." began Dacre, hardly knowing whether to feel dejected or encouraged.

"Years older and worlds wiser. What troubles me," she finished with a schoolgirl's inelegance of speech—"what troubles me is to see what you would get out of it."

"I don't think that need trouble you," said Dacre.

Rosamund looked at him pensively, and Dacre thought her eyes were like moonstones in the sunlight.

"Suppose you repented it?" she said. "I should have spoiled your life just to secure my own comfort . . . because I am not . . ."

"You are not in love with me?" suggested Dacre, when he had waited some time for the end of her sentence. "Are you in love with any one else?"

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"Certainly not," said Rosamund fiercely. "I may have been, but I have changed my mind."

"I rather feared, from what I observed yesterday, that I was too late. Mr. Christian Witt . . ."

"Oh, every one has to be in love with Christian Witt, and he with them. He doesn't count. I don't suppose that I shall ever see him again. I hope not."

"I can't let you knock about the world by yourself," said Dacre, speaking from his own half-settled mind. "You would have to live amongst strangers. I know no one near us who would take you. If I left you in Fichtenstadt . . ."

"I won't stay in Fichtenstadt!" exclaimed Rosamund. "At least . . . I mean . . . I most particularly don't want to."

"Then I think you had better come to Ormathwaite."

Rosamund stared across the plain towards the high Alps.

"Very well," she said. "Come and tell Aunt Betty. I am simply longing to tell Aunt Betty. I only wish we could start this afternoon."

"Wait a minute," said Dacre, half vexed, half laughing. "Sit down again, Rosamund. Would you really like to be married quite soon?"

"I don't want to be married at all," said she. "But I want to go to Ormathwaite with you as soon as possible."

"Then I think you had better make up your mind to be married as soon as possible."

"If I must, I must," said Rosamund.

It was not quite all Dacre could have wished his future wife to say, but he had made up his mind to play a waiting game. He was half amused, half

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vexed again to observe in her now an air of fearful expectation, a poise for flight, and just not enough courage to take it. Evidently she thought his next move would necessarily seal their betrothal in the traditional way with his lips on hers, and the prospect scared her. It hardly cost him a pang to refrain.

"Come, then," he said, getting up. She looked unmistakably relieved, and began to talk to him as they returned to the hotel together.

"I don't mind now if I do go back to Fichtenstadt for a time," she said. "Aunt Betty must put up with me."

"Here she comes," said Dacre, and they both saw Betty approaching. For a wonder, she was by herself.

"The Alpine glow is wonderful to-night," said Betty, looking curiously at her niece's face, which was tense with suppressed excitement. "Have you been watching it?"

"I am afraid not," said Dacre; "we have been talking."

"I told Mr. Dacre that I wished to leave Fichtenstadt," said Rosamund.

"There is no hurry," said Betty. "But of course, your father's commands were that you should live in England."

"I am going there," said Rosamund.

"As my wife," said Dacre.

The two women exchanged rapid glances. Then Betty turned a beaming face to the Englishman, while Rosamund stood by pale and silent, and less triumphant than she had thought to be.

"What a delightful and surprising piece of news!" said Betty. "I am sure it is exactly what poor dear Ulrich would have wished. Perhaps he foresaw it

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when he put Rosamund's affairs in your hands. Shall we lose my niece altogether, Mr. Dacre, or are you going to be a great deal in Fichtenstadt?"

"I am afraid you will lose her altogether," said Dacre. "I shall live in England in future."

Betty turned to her niece, gave her a benedictory kiss, asked her to run on with a message to the hotel, and, when the girl was gone, invited Dacre to sit down for a moment. There was a bench close by.

"It is an odd situation," she said. "Legally it is you who are Rosamund's guardian; but as you propose to marry her, it falls to me to ask certain questions. I know nothing of your circumstances. Can you maintain my niece comfortably?"

"Yes," said Dacre.

"Are you well off, then?"

"I am very well off."

Betty looked at him curiously, and wondered why Rosamund attracted him. She admired the quiet strength of his face herself, but she had never found him an easy man to get on with.

"Have you parents or sisters and brothers?"

"I have one sister."

"Married?"

"No."

Before Betty could ask any more questions Rosamund reappeared, having found some one directly to whom she could give her aunt's message. She brought the evening letters back with her. There was only one for Dacre, and as he read it he uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"That's awkward," he said.

"What's the matter?" said Betty.

"I shall have to run across again . . . to New York. A man I must see, and who was to be in

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London next month, can't come. A fortnight over there will do, but I'm afraid it's more than a month's job altogether."

"When must you start?"

"The sooner the better."

"Yes," said Rosamund, "the sooner the better, because the longer you are away the longer I must be in Fichtenstadt."

"What has Fichtenstadt done to you that you are so anxious to leave it?" said Betty.

"It has cast me out."

"I should like the engagement announced and the preparations for our marriage put in hand at once," said Dacre. "Do you consent to that, Rosamund?"

"Yes," she said, avoiding her aunt's eyes.

"Then we can be married soon after I get back—five or six weeks from to-day, perhaps."

"But all the while you are engaged you will be separated," complained Betty. "And you both take it so coolly. Where is your romance?"

"I am very sorry about it," said Dacre, "but I must go. If Rosamund would like to put off things . . ."

"I would rather hurry them on," said Rosamund.

"My dear child, you are not flattering to your old friends, are you? Besides, you are missing a great deal. The weeks between a girl's betrothal and her marriage ought to be the happiest and gayest in her life. We shall all wish to rally round you with flowers and feasts . . . and music . . ."

Rosamund sprang to her feet.

"I am going in to write some letters," she said.

"Very well," said Betty; "I will come with you, and I hope your manners will be less jerky when Mr. Dacre returns. I am afraid he will have a great

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deal to teach his wife in that way. Am I really to send out the invitations, then, and to have Rosamund's clothes ready?"

"If you please," said Dacre; and then the supper-bell rang loudly from the hotel and summoned them indoors.

"Are you going to write to Christian Witt, or shall I?" said Betty, when she was alone with her niece after supper.

"Why should either of us write?"

"To tell him your news. He will be as much pleased and surprised as I was."

"I am in no hurry to please and surprise him," said Rosamund.

"I am sure he will agree with me that you are a lucky girl, and a sensible one too. I hardly gave you credit for the sense you have shown in accepting Mr. Dacre. But you should not let him see that you are in such a hurry. He might suspect something."

"What is there to suspect?" cried Rosamund wrathfully.

But her aunt only laughed and turned away. Betty felt tired but content. Fate was shaping the future to her wishes, and from early morning she had been busy giving fate a jog in the right direction.

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XVII

DACRE left Obermatt next day, but Betty and Rosamund stayed another week there. A diamond ring that Rosamund thought pretty and Betty valuable had come from London, and Rosamund wore it in the English fashion on the third finger of her left hand. It pleased her to reflect that Christian would soon see it there. She did not know whether her aunt had written to him, and she would not ask. His name never passed her lips now. Sometimes her heart ached when she thought of him; sometimes her anger was consuming. But as the days went by her anger waned, and she began to ask herself whether it had much justification. Her aunt had meddled and driven him away; her aunt had betrayed her.

The ladies travelled back to Fichtenstadt early in September, and the very morning after their arrival Rosamund went to a music shop in the Kaiser Strasse with a message from Betty about the piano. As she was delivering it, Christian Witt walked into the shop from an inner room, and when he saw Rosamund he stopped to speak to her. She could not interpret his manner. It was easy and amiable, and he said he was coming shortly to pay his respects to her aunt.

"She will be very glad to see you," said Rosamund, trying to read in the musician's face what she missed in his manner: his knowledge of her betrothal and his opinion of it.

"I want to talk to her about a new music-teacher for you," he said. "I'm giving up most of my private

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lessons, I am so busy with other things. I believe Fräulein Schlösser would take you."

He did not know then. He was planning to give her up as a pupil and to pass her on to that dull old Fräulein Schlösser, whom Rosamund knew and disliked.

"It is very kind of you to trouble about my music," she said, "but I am leaving Fichtenstadt."

"Leaving Fichtenstadt?"

Christian stared in astonishment.

"I thought my aunt had written to you from Obermatt."

"I have not heard a word of either your aunt or you since we parted at Gross Laufenburg. Where are you going?"

"To England."

"Oh, to England. I suppose that is your guardian's doing?"

"Yes, I am going with him."

"For long?"

"We are to be married the first week in October," said Rosamund.

She smiled bravely as she made her announcement, but her courage only just lasted out. Christian's voice and presence made their old magic directly they were together again. When she told him she was about to marry another man the words seemed to leave her spirit in ashes instead of triumphant; and when, instead of speaking, he looked at her, half sorry, half surprised, even a little ashamed, she thought, she turned away and ran out of the shop. He had not uttered one word of congratulation, or shown any personal disappointment—in fact, if his manner showed pity, it was for her and not for himself. She did not tell her aunt she had seen him, and

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he did not mention their encounter when he called next day, and was told by Betty of Rosamund's approaching marriage.

"You see, it has come all right," said Betty. "A girl of that age attaches herself to any one."

"So it seems," said Christian doubtfully. "I hope the child will be happy."

"She ought to be; it is a very good match for her."

"People are not happy because they ought to be," said Christian; but when Rosamund came into the room he congratulated her.

She did not see much of him during the next few weeks, and she guessed that he avoided the house and her society. When they met he still seemed to regard her as a beloved child, but he did not show his regard quite so freely as before. He had accepted her aunt's invitation to the wedding, which, on account of the bride's mourning, was to be a quiet one. Rosamund's dreams and wishes all went towards him still. Dacre generally was out of mind as well as out of sight. Betty took good care that her niece's days were occupied, and that she was too tired at night to lie awake. She insisted that Rosamund must learn the whole art of housekeeping in a month from herself, from her maid, and at a school of cookery. What with the pursuit of these affairs, the business of her trousseau, and invitations from congratulating friends, the girl had no breathing-time. Sheer physical fatigue blunted her sensations, and if once in a while she thought of her marriage with a pang, her next thought was that she had no alternative. The preparations were nearly complete; the bridegroom was coming; day after day was crowded. As for Betty, she was sweet as sugar. Like most women, she enjoyed ordering clothes, even

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though they were not for herself; and she went about her business with the conviction that she had made the match, and had acted prudently both for Rosamund and herself. She wanted to be rid of her niece, but she felt quite pleased that her niece was making a good marriage.

One or two letters had come to Rosamund from Dacre, and she had read them with mingled satisfaction and amazement. "Any one might read them," she said to herself; "any one might have written them." They told her about his journey, about his future movements, and about the weather. Goethe's ninth Sonnet was her idea of a love-letter:

"Weil ich nicht kommen kann soll was ich sende
Mein ungetheiltes Herz hinüber tragen
Mit Wonnen, Hoffnungen, Entzücken, Plagen:
Das alles hat nicht Anfang, hat nicht Ende."

But she never for a moment wished Dacre to write to her in such a strain, for how could she have responded? He wrote about storms and fellow-travellers; she wrote about the day's doings, and never once about the day's dreams. On the last day of September, when a telegram came to say he would arrive to-morrow night, it was as personal and affectionate as their letters. She supposed they were to spend life so, always interested in the weather and shutting their eyes to the temperamental atmosphere that affects imaginative natures so much more than climate. It was a simplification of life she felt ready to accept. Yet when the morrow came and the hour of his arrival her heart failed her. As he walked into the room the sudden fact of his presence upset her calm as a touch upsets a house of cards, and during the few days between his arrival and their marriage she never recovered it.

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Dacre did not know what to make of her mood. He tried to recall the demeanour of other girls in her position, but his experience did not serve him. He had studied water-beetles, but he had not studied brides. Betty assured him that Rosamund was only nervous and bewildered like most girls on the eve of marriage, and she took care that he and her niece were hardly ever by themselves. Dacre did not feel satisfied, but he was as busy from morning till night as the two ladies were; for besides the social engagements pressing on him, he still had business matters to arrange both in connection with Professor Elsler's work and with his money. On the day before his marriage, however, he went out with Rosamund to meet his sister on her arrival, and before going to the station they sat down together in a quiet corner of the Stadt Park. Rosamund took this opportunity to ask for her mother's ornaments again, and to remind Dacre that she wished to give some to her aunt.

"Very well," he said, after a little hesitation, "I will get them for you first thing to-morrow from the bank."

"Then, may I give Aunt Betty the two things she wants, the ring and the diamond comb?"

"If it makes you happy to do so."

"When I asked you before you would not allow it."

"Their value was of importance to you then."

Rosamund seemed to reflect on this reply, and then she began to speak rather hurriedly and with her eyes averted from his.

"Every one thinks I am so lucky to marry you because you have money," she said; "the people with gross manners say so outright, the others manage to show it. I want to tell you that I have never thought

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about that side. I never understand or care much about money. I have been used to such a bleak, plain life at the Dorotheenstift. If you would have let me I would have gone back there."

"It was not necessary to tell me this," said Dacre; "I knew it."

He spoke with generous conviction, while Rosamund scanned his face, trying to find encouragement there for still further daring. The words were almost on her lips. At the eleventh hour should they give up the uncertain adventure of their marriage? Should she return to the Dorotheenstift until she knew her mind more plainly?

"Joan arrives at five," said Dacre, getting up. "We have only just time to get to the station."

Rosamund got up too, and walked beside him. When they came to the station and the train came in she waited in the background while he went forward to find his sister. She observed that it was not only his English clothes that marked him out from his surroundings; he had the quiet sense and dignity of manner that carry men of his nation through the difficult places of life. She could not imagine him either flurried or intimidated, and she was quite sure that he would never seek a quarrel or fail to show fight when one was forced on him. She watched him make his way through people running to and fro like ants whose eggs have been disturbed; and from where she stood she watched his meeting with his sister. They did not kiss each other, and that seemed as strange to the German girl as the want of sentiment in his letters. She saw that his sister's softer face had a look of his, but her manner was more animated. She showed delight when she met her brother; she thrust rugs and books into his hand, and hurrying up

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to Rosamund, she kissed her affectionately before Dacre had time to present them to each other.

"This day has seemed as drawn out as a week," she said; "I have longed so to see you."

She had a caressing voice and way with her, and a friendly laugh in her dark eyes. Her clothes were floppy and her hair rather dishevelled. She had her hands full of parcels, and her travelling-bag was so full that it gaped at each end, but she did not seem conscious of anything being otherwise than it should be. She stood close to Rosamund while her brother looked after her luggage, and chatted about her journey and about a halt at Cologne, where she had been to the Zoological Gardens and seen the most beautiful peacocks. She had seen the Dom too, but she was evidently more interested in the peacocks. She was still describing them when they all three got into a cab together, and it was only as they stopped at the hotel where she was to stay with her brother that she asked Rosamund what she should wear to-night. Rosamund explained that her aunt expected a good many people, and that there would be music.

Betty had her capable hands full, but she found time to ask Rosamund what she thought of the bridegroom's sister. Rosamund made some colourless reply, and secretly hoped that Joan's clothes would do her justice to-night. It was no use telling Betty that Joan had sweet eyes and a low, rich voice. If she could have mentioned a tailor-made gown with the new gores she would gladly have done so.

A good many people had arrived already when Dacre and his sister made their appearance. Christian Witt had sat down to the piano, but had not begun to play yet. Betty, in diaphanous grey, was talking to

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him, and Rosamund had just come in from a smaller sitting-room where the wedding-presents were displayed. Betty, Dacre, and Joan were all near the piano now, and she had to go up to them. She had been trying to keep away from Christian, because she knew that it was wicked of her to wish as she did that he was dauntless and faithful like the young Lochinvar, and that, with one touch to her hand and one word in her ear, he would even now carry her away. How gladly she would go with him! His fingers had touched the keys now, his eyes glanced towards her, and he began to play. First he played one or two light things that he judged suitable to the mixed company; then he looked at Rosamund again, and, with the sudden decisive manner characteristic of him, he began the march of the Davidsbündler. He played it for her, she knew, because she loved it. The mighty chords, the ecstasy, and the sadness were his good-bye. She watched his intent face, and she wished that life need not go on, with its enigmas and its disappointments, beyond this exquisite moment when she listened and he played.

But the exquisite moments of life come to an end, and the people of little understanding jar the very memory of them. So Rosamund felt at least when the last chord was played, and Betty came up with Joan Dacre, who had consented to sing. Joan looked like a picture in a pale-blue velvet gown, and every other woman in the room, except Betty, looked like a clumsy reproduction of the prevailing mode. But the others were very well pleased with themselves, and had stared and whispered when they saw Joan's draperies and turquoises. They forgave her because she was English, and they forgave her dark Rossetti hair and her halting speech. But Rosamund knew

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that they would never forgive or forget if she sang badly. She had Brahms' *Sapphische Ode* in her hands! Rosamund glanced at Christian entreatingly. He knew no one English could sing it, and he was clever enough to stop anything he wished. She did not want people to make fun of this kind, beautiful Joan, and she could interpret the malicious twinkle in Betty's eyes. But Christian did not respond. He looked at Joan as if he saw the picture she made, and not her divergence from the fashion books. He asked her the name of her teacher, and sat down to play her accompaniment. Rosamund fled into the adjoining room, and found Dacre by himself there. He had a leather case in his hands that he had just taken from its wrappings.

"Joan is going to sing," she said.

"Is she?" said Dacre, seemingly unmoved.

"Can she sing?"

"You will hear directly."

"But Christian Witt is going to accompany her. If she sings badly he is capable of stopping in the middle and getting up in a rage."

"I think you wrong him," said Dacre; "he is neither a child nor . . . quite . . . a savage."

He had opened the leather case now, and displayed a diamond necklace and two diamond stars for the hair.

"These are for you," he said. "Would you like to wear them now, or not till to-morrow? They only arrived from England to-night."

Even Rosamund could see that the diamonds he gave so quietly were splendid, too splendid, she thought, for her to wear. She almost shrank from them, and then she tried to thank him, and stopped half-way with uplifted hand and solemn, wondering

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eyes. Joan's voice, Joan's low, wonderful voice, came to them from the outer room:

"Rosen brach ich Nachts mir am dunklen Hage;
Süsser hauchten Duft sie, als je am Tage."

"What a voice!" murmured Rosamund under her breath—"oh, what a voice!"

She hardly took count of what Dacre was doing. He had come close to her with the unclasped necklace in his hands. The passionate music, Joan's voice, Christian's touch on the piano, stirred and held her.

"Auch der Küsse Duft mich wie nie berückte
Die ich Nachts vom Strauch deiner Lippen pflückte."

Dacre was fastening the diamonds round her throat. Then, with some whispered word about the beauty of her hair, he put the diamond stars in it, and then, seeing they were by themselves, he took her in his arms and kissed her. She went white to the lips, and neither spoke nor raised her eyes. She would have torn the diamonds from her if she could. They felt heavy and cold.

The song came to an end, a buzz of admiration followed it, and Christian's voice sounded above the others in praise and encouragement. When Rosamund went through into the other room she found herself surrounded in her turn. Every one wanted to see her jewels—every one wished her joy. Her eyes sought Christian, but he stood apart from the others and looked at Joan Dacre. The flash of the bride's diamonds did not reach him in that quiet corner where he talked of music to the English girl.

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XVIII

THE civil ceremony and the religious ceremony were over. The wedding-dinner, with its interminable healths and speeches, was nearly over. The speeches had all been in honour of Rosamund's celebrated father and of his already honoured and soon to be equally celebrated son-in-law. Many lights of the University were present, and they burnt incense before the great man who was dead and the young living man who was following in his footsteps. If they swung their censers in a new direction, it was towards Betty, their charming hostess, who sat between the bridegroom and the most important guest in a rose-coloured gown, as pale and yet as vivid as the inside of a shell. She was a brilliant figure, and she wore the diamond comb that Rosamund had given her that morning.

Rosamund neither ate nor drank, nor did she speak except when Dacre addressed her. Her high, plain-white satin dress did not suit such a dejected-looking bride. Her veil covered her bright hair, her down-cast eyelids hid her eyes.

"Heaven help the man! I would not stand in his shoes," thought Christian Witt as he looked at the girl's tragic face.

One old man got up and valiantly began his speech with an allusion to the beautiful and happy bride, but as he did not even know her by sight, was said to be half blind, and sat a long way off, his flattery did not carry much conviction. While the glasses were still clinking to his toast, Dacre told Rosamund

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in an undertone to slip out and change her gown. She got up at once and Betty followed her. They found old Luise waiting for them, and Betty was glad of her presence. Rosamund had hardly looked wide awake all day, and even when she had given her aunt the ring and the diamond comb that morning her manner had not been affectionate. She did not speak while Luise took off her veil and her wedding-gown, and Betty gave her whole attention to the grey travelling coat and skirt which she hoped would pass muster in England, where tailoring, she said, was the national fine art. Rosamund had just put them on when there was a knock at the door, and Joan came in with a bunch of Neapolitan violets.

"I have brought you these," she said to Rosamund. "Will has just told me that we are not to crowd round you as you go away, so I have come here to bid you good-bye. Herr Witt is in the hall with Will waiting to bid you good-bye too. He says he is an old friend. I have asked him to come and see us at Ormathwaite some day, and he says he would like it."

"Are you going to live on at Ormathwaite now that your brother is married?" said Betty.

"I have nowhere else to live," said Joan, with a startled glance towards Rosamund. "I am often away, but . . ."

A knock at the door interrupted her.

"We shall miss our train," said Dacre's voice outside.

It was early evening now, and the hall lamp was lighted. As Rosamund came from her room she saw the two men standing under it—Dacre and Christian Witt. They were of equal height, but Dacre's hard, well-knit figure suggested greater strength. The

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German was much fairer than the Englishman and more lively. He was smoking a cigar and talking to Dacre, using both hands to help out his insufficient tongue. They turned at the sound of the opening door, and Dacre took a step forward to meet his bride. Betty and Joan were both beside her, and while the brother and sister said good-bye, Rosamund offered a chilly little hand to Christian Witt. He held it fast for a moment, called her "dear child" again, and wished her happiness. She stood there numb and silent while Betty and Joan both kissed her. Dacre had to touch her arm before she moved away with him. Christian and Joan glanced at each other and glanced away again, half frightened of some self-betrayal. Both wondered what lay before Dacre, and both felt more sorry for him than for his bride—Joan because he was her beloved brother, and Christian because he understood something of men, but nothing at all of girls.

But poor little Rosamund was the more unhappy of the two as she preceded her husband downstairs. She felt afraid and desolate. The romance, the excitement, and the joy of a marriage consecrated by love had all been wanting on her wedding-day. The last spark of the bravado that had sustained her flickered out as Dacre put her into the carriage waiting for them and seated himself beside her. How little she had foreseen the sensations of this hour! How flat and yet how terrible it was to venture forth beside a man whose voice could cast no spell, whose least caress you dreaded! She had consented to this great outward change in her life with some vague hope that a corresponding inward change would come of it. She had expected the ceremony of to-day to end her old life as suddenly

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and completely as her arrival home last winter had ended her life at school. She remembered how easy it had been to forget the rigid rules, the likes and the dislikes of the Dorotheenstift. But then she was escaping from surveillance and entering into that golden future where the dreams of early girlhood were to find fulfilment. Now the future lay before her, final, hopeless, little comprehended. She looked at Dacre's strong profile as if she saw it for the first time, and for the first time panic seized her.

Dacre did not know what to think. In spite of Betty's assurances, it was becoming more and more difficult to believe that Rosamund was only suffering from fatigue and strain. At first he left her alone. They were going no further than Bertholdsruhe that night, and an hour's railway journey took them there. Other people travelled in their compartment, and it was not till they got to their hotel that they were by themselves again. They were taken to a large room that had been reserved for them on the first floor. The waiter lighted candles, took Dacre's orders for dinner, saw the luggage carried in, and then shut the door behind him.

Rosamund stood in the middle of the room looking, Dacre thought, as wretched as a man who hears the gaol doors close upon him and knows they have closed for life. He went up to her, led her to a sofa, sat down beside her, and unclasped her travelling cloak. Then, as you might do to a child who was near you and yet shyly looked away, he put his arm round her and gently turned her averted face towards his. He saw the blood flame in her cheeks and leave them ashen white. She shrank as far as she could from him, and looked so scared and miserable that with a sigh he got up.

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"You must lie down and rest," he said. "I will leave you for an hour."

An unmistakable expression of relief on Rosamund's face convinced him that his absence was what she most desired; so for nearly an hour he walked up and down the streets of Bertholdsruhe, too anxious and perplexed to notice the life around him, too ignorant of women to know whether his bride would melt in his arms when he returned, or still hold him at arm's length as an enemy. The situation was both tragic and absurd, but Dacre made up his mind to have patience. When the hour was nearly over he bought a box of chocolates for the child waiting in that bare, dimly-lighted room for him.

Meanwhile Rosamund felt as ready for rest as a hare who hears the hounds after it. She did not stop to consider what she owed to Dacre, or what he might justly feel of anger and disappointment. She was too panic-stricken for reflection of any kind. She looked round the room, and felt oppressed by the strangeness of it. The two candles burning on the table in front of her did not light the remote corners. From where she sat she could just make out her big wooden trunk and Dacre's English-looking luggage side by side. Their handbags were on the table, and she drew hers towards her and took out her purse. She did not know what to do next, but there was the open door and there lay freedom if she had the courage to seize it—freedom and escape from all this flying hour must lead to if she wavered and, like a coward, stayed. At any rate she might go out into the street. Perhaps the fresh air would steady her. She felt driven by fear, as men do who run from flames, without caring where their steps take them or whom they hurt on the way.

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In the hall she met the waiter who had shown them their room. He stood aside respectfully and watched her pass out into the street. She walked a little way and found that people stared at her a good deal. That frightened her, and she began to wish she had somewhere definite to go. The station lights gave her an idea. She crossed the road, found the booking office, and asked when there would be a train to Fichtenstadt. She would go to old Luise, and telegraph to Dacre telling him what she had done. Of course he would be angry. Rosamund reflected with a flash of compunction that he could hardly be as angry as she deserved. He would never see her or speak to her again, and the lawyers would probably help him to marry some one else. Betty would be angry too, but that did not matter. Rosamund would never see her again either. She would go and live with Luise in the old woman's native village, where the forest came up to your back-door and the geese were always running races in the dust. There would be a train to Fichtenstadt in half an hour, the man said, and he gave Rosamund the second-class ticket for which she asked.

Half an hour was a long while to wait, especially as the time could not be passed in some dark and hidden corner. Every one about to travel was penned in a well-lighted waiting-room with a restaurant attached, and most people were eating and drinking. Rosamund found a seat behind an open door, and sat there patiently watching the clock. She did not make plans, or vacillate, or look forward to difficulties. The long strain of the day, and of the weeks preceding it, seemed suddenly over. She felt as if she had died, and was waiting in quiescence for what came next. Presently there was some movement amongst the

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people in the room. A railway official opened a door and announced in a loud voice that the train to Fichtenstadt would start in five minutes. Rosamund rose from her seat and ventured beyond her sheltering door a little further into the room. She was trying to slip in front of some old ladies progressing very slowly when she felt a touch on her arm.

"What are you doing here, Rosamund?" said Dacre. She turned with a guilty start and did not answer. He took the ticket from her hand, looked at it, tore it in two and threw it away.

"Come," he said.

He did not speak again until they reached their room in the hotel. The candles were still burning on the table, her cloak lay as she had left it on the sofa; she saw a new package beside her travelling-bag, and guessed that Dacre had brought it and left it there when he found her gone. She had no courage yet to look at him, much less to speak; but though her eyes were cast down, she knew that he was looking at her.

"So you were running away from me," he said at last; and to her amazement he spoke kindly. "Are you as much afraid as that, child?"

"I want to go back to Fichtenstadt," she said, taking courage. "I want to live with old Luise. If I may have my own money, there will be enough for us both."

"Is that all you want?" said Dacre.

His voice was not quite so kind then. Its irony stung her into looking at him, and as she did so she made a discovery. In no sense could she measure her strength against his, and he knew this; yet she had hurt him. His eyes were full of trouble rather than of anger.

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"I wish I had thought of it before," she said naïvely.

"So do I," said her husband.

Rosamund hung her head. That there was his point of view to consider as well as her own had not presented itself with any force until now.

"If you had told me a week ago that you would rather live in a garret with old Luise than be my wife . . . if you had told me yesterday . . . this morning even . . . something might have been done. Now it is too late."

"But I didn't know I should hate it so . . . till we came away . . . by ourselves," said Rosamund.

"Directly I got back to Fichtenstadt I saw that you looked ill and miserable. I spoke to your aunt about it, and she assured me that you were only tired, and would be all right when we were married."

"She used to say so to me too," said Rosamund; "I half believed her. But of course she would have said anything to gain her point."

"What was her point?"

"To get me out of Fichtenstadt."

"Why?"

Rosamund hesitated. She did not like answering Dacre's curt questions; she did not see where the next would lead her. Yet she did not know how to evade them.

"I suppose I was in her way," she said lamely.

"With Mr. Christian Witt?"

Rosamund's silence and her sudden flush answered him.

"What made you consent to marry me?" he said, speaking with some hardness now. "If you cared for another man, you should have told me so. It

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was not an impossible marriage. It might have been arranged for you."

"But Herr Witt does not wish to marry," said Rosamund.

"How do you know?"

"He told Aunt Betty so."

"When?"

"At Klein Laufenburg."

A long silence succeeded this quick interchange of question and answer. Dacre walked up and down the room once or twice, and Rosamund's eyes followed him into the shadows, and stared at the floor when he came back again. The suspense seemed unbearable. She had floundered into confession, and did not know what to expect at his hands, or whether to be glad or sorry that he had forced the truth from her. A knock at the door took Dacre to that end of the room, and he told the waiter who came to announce dinner that they would be down in a few minutes. When the door had closed he came up to Rosamund again.

"You told me you did not love any one else," he said.

"It was true . . . it was true!" cried the girl. "I thought I hated him."

"Why should you? What had he done?"

"Aunt Betty asked him to marry me, and he refused. Now you know the whole story."

"It is a very pretty one," said Dacre. "And now will you get ready for dinner?"

"Am I to stay with you, then?"

"Of course you are to stay."

She did not know how to interpret his tone. It was authoritative and a little disdainful, but not harsh. He told her how to find the private room in

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which their dinner was to be served, and when she went in there he came forward to receive her. There were lights and flowers on the table, a good dinner and good champagne. Such things, though they are material, tend to comfort the spirit. Besides, Dacre's tranquillity of manner reassured Rosamund. When they were left to themselves she summoned up courage to ask him how he had known where to find her.

"The hotel porter saw you in the waiting-room," he said.

"What should you have done if the train had started?" she asked.

"Taken the next one."

She looked surprised.

"I thought that if I went away I should never see you again," she said.

"I'm afraid you don't understand yet," said Dacre. "When we were married this morning we entered into a contract with each other that only death can dissolve."

XIX

SINCE her mother's death Rosamund had never been of importance to anybody. Her father had not kept her with him, Betty had shown her plainly that she was in the way, Christian's affection was a trifling matter, and now she had begun her married life by doing her best to alienate her husband. As she sat at the open window of her room she wondered disconsolately how her behaviour yesterday would affect her future. Perhaps, in spite of what Dacre had said about marriage being indissoluble, he would arrange

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for her to live away from him and with strangers. How could she expect him to forgive and forget? When they met at breakfast this morning he had been urbane and kind, but she knew instinctively that she had raised a barrier. She had thrust him from her, and he would remember it probably as long as they both lived. The sunshine was flooding the room that had looked so dark and forbidding the night before; the bright warm day cheered Rosamund. When Dacre entered the room she looked at him wistfully, like a child who is ready to ask forgiveness, but has no courage. He sat down opposite her, and began to talk of dates and journeys.

"They cannot be ready for us at Ormathwaite for about three weeks," he began; and then he stopped in surprise, because Rosamund's face first flashed with pleasure and then reddened with confusion.

"I didn't know," she stammered; "I thought perhaps you would not want me at Ormathwaite."

"Where would you propose to go instead?"

"I don't know."

Dacre did not permit himself to smile. He looked gravely at his time-tables, and said that they would make a move to-day. They had arranged to go to Italy, and then to Paris.

"It was Aunt Betty who insisted on Paris," said Rosamund; "I would rather see London."

"Very well," said Dacre, "we will give up Paris and have a week in London."

"But shall you care for that? Of course you know London."

"It will give me pleasure to show it to you," said Dacre.

Rosamund looked at the sky and the trees, and then her eyes came back to her husband. The sunshine

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the sense of youth, the thought of foreign cities, were all exhilarating. She was not quite so wretched to-day as she had expected to be.

"I wonder you care to show me anything," she said shamefacedly.

Perhaps he did not hear. He made no sign, and she had spoken in a low voice. But she had no courage to try again, and presently he found what he wanted in his time-tables, and asked her to be ready in half an hour. Soon after he went downstairs to give orders about their luggage, and she did not see him again until they met at the hotel door and crossed the road to the railway-station. They were detained for a few minutes in the waiting-room where she had sat the night before, and Rosamund remembered how forlorn she had felt, and how she had feared her husband's devastating wrath when he found her. She was used to people who said a great deal when they were angry, who brought out their thunder and turned every one's sky as black as possible. When Betty scolded her maids you could hear her voice all over the flat, and when Christian was in a rage his whole body expressed it. If Dacre had struck her, Rosamund would hardly have been surprised. She felt sure he would storm at her first, and then treat her like a criminal. But so far he had done nothing of the kind. He had looked angry enough last night when he fetched her back to the hotel, but how little he had said! Yet she thought the anger must be deep in his heart. He attended to her comfort, he consulted her wishes, sometimes he smiled, but she could not flatter herself that he felt happy. It was dawning on her that in a loveless marriage the woman is not invariably the only victim. This was quite a new and a distressing idea.

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They stayed a week at Florence and a week at Venice, and in both cities Dacre met English friends, who tried to be charming to Rosamund, and were charming to him without trying. Rosamund felt ill at ease with these people, and, as far as she might, avoided their company. In spite of her English mother, she did not feel one of them. In Venice she came into a room at an unlucky moment, and heard a broken scrap of a discussion she was not meant to hear—something about Dacre of Ormathwaite having married a stupid little German girl, something about an expedition at which he was wanted and she was not. They stopped in consternation when they saw her, and by their manner she could tell that they were uncertain whether she had heard, and that the doubt distressed them. For they were quite kindly, pleasant people. Only they thought the world of Dacre, and not very much of her. It was quite natural, she said to herself afterwards, but it was not exactly inspiring. Soon after this Dacre caught her staring with grave intentness at her image in the glass. She was so much absorbed that she did not see him until he stood behind her.

“Well, Rosamund,” he said, rather amused.

“I was wondering if I looked very stupid,” said she.

“Of course you don't. Why should you?”

“I am beginning to find out that I am very ignorant,” she said sadly. “I have been nowhere; I know nothing and no one. When I am with your friends I sit there like a fool while they talk to you of things I don't understand. Of course they think me a fool.”

“My dear girl, you are nineteen, and these people are between thirty and forty. They might think you a fool if you rushed in where you didn't under-

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stand. I'm glad you never do that. Now I want to tell you about an expedition we are planning for to-morrow."

"I would rather not go," said Rosamund hastily.

"Do you mean to refuse before you hear what it is?"

That was exactly what Rosamund did mean, but she could not say so. She listened to her husband's explanation, and then she said she hoped he would go and let her stay at home.

"Why?" said Dacre.

Rosamund flushed, and made some lame excuse.

"But, of course, I will go if you desire it," she added.

She wished as she glanced at him that she knew better how to read his mind. She felt more anxious every day to please him, for every day was helping to restore her old trust in him. In some ways he behaved like a lover. He brought her flowers; he had a lover's quick eye for her comfort and her fancies. He was the most charming of companions, even in picture-galleries, though he said he knew nothing of pictures. He had the well-bred Englishman's faculty of managing life without fuss or ill humour. When things went a little wrong he made the best of them, but in so far as they depended on his sense and forethought they never did go wrong.

Rosamund was discovering how pleasant life could be under such circumstances. She found herself thinking about her husband when he left her, trying to make friends with him when he returned. But kind as he was, he baffled her. To-day, for instance, when she said she would join the expedition if he desired it, he told her, with his air of friendly irony, to do as she pleased. She felt sure he thought her unreasonable, but would not say so. She began to think

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that if she had offended a man of more primitive manners, he would perhaps have raged violently at the outset, and yet have been a simpler creature to appease.

When they got to London, matters were worse from her point of view. Dacre met people he knew at every corner, and those who were unattached wanted him for lunch and dinner at their clubs. He used to explain that he would not leave his young wife, and ask them to his hotel instead. Rosamund thought he welcomed opportunities of adding a chorus to their duet, for even when they went sight-seeing they often had a companion.

After Mrs. Eastwood arrived at the hotel, Dacre sometimes arranged that his wife should go out with her instead of with him. Mrs. Eastwood lived near him in the country, and her husband was an old friend. She terrified Rosamund, who had never met any one like her before, and wished, till she knew her better, that she never need again. Mrs. Eastwood wore number seven boots; she stood six feet in her stockings, and had a voice to match her stature. In the morning she came down in a tailor-made coat and skirt, and ate a breakfast as solid as a Frenchman's dinner. At night she appeared in evening dresses renovated by her maid, and with a heightened colour that was healthy, but no more becoming than her raiment.

Her English was the slangy, elusive English of her kind, and Rosamund found it as puzzling as her ways and her prejudices. She was quite good-humoured, and more self-satisfied than an archangel would rightly be. She had no interests except in outdoor games and in animals. If Rosamund had been a dog she would have made friends at once, but she did not

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know what to do with a creature who hailed from Germany, and had never seen a hockey match. At Dacre's request she took her to some of the London shops on two separate occasions, but these expeditions did not help to form a friendship.

"Your husband tells me you're always in frillies that won't do at Ormathwaite," she said to Rosamund. "He wants you to be turned out like the rest of us. Of course, I can give you a tip or two, because I know all about clothes, and Joan knows nothing. Some women would turn snarkey perhaps, but Dacre says he'll lay odds you don't. Have you a tidy mac?"

"I don't know," said Rosamund, who understood Shakespeare better than Mrs. Eastwood; and when she went home, having acquired some garments she thought hideous, she asked her husband to interpret.

"Did you say you'd lay odds I shouldn't turn snarkey?" she inquired.

Dacre laughed, and asked his wife what she had bought.

"A most unpleasant cloak that smells of gas and looks like pea-soup. It cost a great deal, and is guaranteed to keep out heavy rain. I told Mrs. Eastwood that I stayed at home in heavy rain, and she said I was quite too rippin'. We also went to her boot-maker's, and ordered two pairs of boots exactly like hers. One of them is to have large nails in the soles. I have observed . . ."

"Well?" said Dacre.

"It is not good-natured of me," owned Rosamund, "but I have observed that when Mrs. Eastwood sits down she sticks out her boots as if she was not ashamed of them."

"She is probably proud of them."

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"Besides the boots, we bought a very ugly cloth coat."

"But why did you take an ugly one?" said Dacre. "I thought Mrs. Eastwood knew all about clothes."

Rosamund actually looked at him with a gleam of derision in her long eyes.

"Perhaps she knows what suits your climate," she said. "She cannot suit herself. When she buys clothes she is always thinking about the roads and the weather, and not about her own appearance, and she does not seem to mind what things cost. She wanted me to take a fur coat for thirty pounds."

"Did you take it?"

"Certainly not."

Dacre had been sitting at a table writing letters when Rosamund came in. She wore her tailor-made grey gown and a big black hat with feathers, and he noticed that she looked rather chilly.

"Have you any furs?" he said. "The winter is cold at Ormathwaite."

"My new coat will be warm enough for anything," said she; "but I shall only want to wear it in the dark."

Dacre said nothing more just then, but after lunch he asked Rosamund if she had made any engagement with Mrs. Eastwood for the afternoon.

"No," said Rosamund. "She told me she was going to ramp round with pasteboards till she dropped."

"We will go out by ourselves, then," said Dacre.

"We have not done that for a week," said Rosamund. "I should like to walk up Regent Street and look at the shops. Mrs. Eastwood won't walk a step. She says the late hours here make her feel a bit cheap; and this morning she told me one of her

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feet had been rocky ever since she came a purler in the field last winter. I don't know what she meant, and if that is the way you talk now, I think German schools ought to inform themselves. We used to read *The Vicar of Wakefield* at the Dorotheenstift."

"I will do anything you please except stand in front of drapers' shops," said Dacre.

But they walked up Regent Street together, and he took her to a furrier's where, without any idea of the cost of such things, she chose a sable pelerine and muff, and a loose fur-lined coat for driving.

"Can I afford them?" she whispered as the assistant went to make out the bill.

"I can," said Dacre.

"But I think I ought to pay for my own things if my money still belongs to me. You have never explained about that to me, or told me what I shall have to spend on clothes."

"We will go into that some day at Ormathwaite," said Dacre.

He got out his cheque-book and wrote a cheque for the furs; and while the attendant took it to the cashier's desk, Rosamund tried to thank her husband. She had the pelerine on her shoulders and the muff in her hands, and she looked smiling and pretty as she raised her eyes to his.

But as she walked out of the shop she felt vaguely chilled and disappointed, she hardly knew why. Dacre's smile had civilly answered hers, yet—she could not have told you how—he had been irresponsive. Perhaps his kindness did not proceed from personal affection at all, but from a sense of duty. Perhaps he gave her furs as he gave her bread-and-butter—because he had undertaken to supply her needs. Perhaps he had really cast her out of his

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heart, although he let her live at his side. If in her folly she had brought this about, the future would be wintry indeed.

As they walked on up Regent Street they stopped in front of a window with photographs, and she saw one that reminded her of Christian Witt. His name had never passed her lips or Dacre's since the night of their marriage, but now, without stopping to consider, she turned to her husband and pointed to the photograph resembling the musician.

"Isn't it like Christian Witt?" she said.

Directly she had spoken she knew that Christian's name on her lips angered her husband. He walked on, and did not speak until he reached Liberty's second window.

"We will go in here," he said. "I want to get something for Joan."

XX

THEY were in the train on their way north, and they had a compartment to themselves. At St. Pancras Dacre had bought Rosamund a sheaf of illustrated papers and magazines, but she had not opened them yet. It amused her more to look out of the windows at the English landscape, and to think about the English home at the end of her journey. She had travelled so far and seen so much since her marriage that each day had been full of its own events and its own new surroundings. She had not dwelt much on the quiet country life awaiting her, and she had not asked Dacre many questions about Ormathwaite.

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The rift between them had widened since yesterday, when she had spoken the name that was losing its glamour, and had seen him stiffen at it. After they got back to the hotel she had tried to approach him, but she felt hot and uncomfortable to-day, as she thought of her failure. She had gone up to her husband and had said, without hesitation or preamble:

"Did you mind my speaking of Christian Witt? I hardly ever think of him now."

"That is wise of you," he had said; but though he looked at her with a gleam of amusement, his manner did not encourage her to say more. To-day her glance often sought his face, but he read steadily and did not seem to see, and she had no excuse for disturbing him. They were near Leicester before he put down his *Times*, and then he stretched out his hand for some of her picture papers. She could not resist a little sigh of impatience and disappointment.

"What is it?" he said at once.

"Are you going to read through all these now?" she asked.

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to tell me about Ormathwaite."

"But I have told you over and over again . . . it is a grey stone house with moors round it . . . ten miles from a railway-station . . . ten miles from a lemon it used to be . . . now, of course, we get our lemons by post."

"But is there no town? . . . Are there no shops?"

"There is a shop in the village where you can buy pickles and boot-laces when you want them."

"I should think housekeeping must be difficult there."

"Not at all. Some things come by post or by carrier, and the rest we 'raise' ourselves. But

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you will have nothing to do with that. Joan has always kept house, and she had better go on . . . at any rate for a time, until you are used to English ways."

Rosamund hardly knew whether to feel relieved or disappointed. She began to wonder what her place would be, and what she would find to do.

"I have read some English novels," she said. "I thought a country house was always full of people, and that you played tennis by day and had private theatricals at night . . . except, of course, when you went to bazaars."

"I'm afraid we are not as lively as that at Ormathwaite," said Dacre, and he took up a magazine as if he thought the subject exhausted; but Rosamund returned to it.

"Are there many neighbours?" she asked.

"Very few . . . within reach . . . just the Eastwoods and Frank Ilchester . . . and the Vicar and his sisters. That is why I have decided to settle down there for the present. I expect to work in peace."

"Who is Frank Ilchester?"

"Mrs. Eastwood's brother. But he is not much at home."

"Is your house a large one? Is there a pretty garden there?" persisted Rosamund.

Dacre was fluttering through the pages of a magazine now, and he paused before he answered her again. But as he did so he raised his eyes and met her eager glance. He put down the magazine, leant back in his seat, and looked at the wife he was taking home with him, wondering for a moment what his folk would make of her. She was a foreigner, she was a child, she had never sat on a horse, and did not know a bull-dog from a terrier. Even her

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beauty was elusive and variable. A slip of a girl she looked still, with graceful movements and a blush that came like a throb in her face and throat. Her eyes changed with her mood and the light, from the green of moonstones to what might pass for black; they were long and set rather far apart. Her hair, now that she knew better what to do with it, was a glory. Ever since his marriage Dacre had felt like a man who has a wounded bird in his hands—that he is afraid to let go and hates to hold. Every flutter distressed him, and yet made him tighten his grasp. However unhappy she was, he must keep her with him. Besides, little as he knew of women, he knew that the last word was perhaps not said. He might win her yet. But he meant to do his wooing in his own way, and it was not the way he had chosen before. He told her that Ormathwaite was a good-sized house, and that it had a large garden. Then the train stopped at Leicester, and he changed into a smoking compartment. Rosamund amused herself as best she could with her magazines, but she looked glad to see him when they arrived at Sheffield and he came back again. He asked her if she would like a tea-basket.

“Very much,” she said “It will be something to do. This *has* been a dull journey!”

It was dark long before they arrived at Whincliffe, the station for Ormathwaite. A carriage was there to meet them, and a cart for luggage. A footman was waiting on the platform, and came forward directly he saw Dacre. He took their handbags and rugs, and showed Rosamund the way to the carriage. She sat there and looked out of the window, but she could see nothing but the lighted station-yard and some tall mill chimneys beyond. As they drove

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through Whincliffe she got an impression of a broad street with small shops on either side. Then they turned into an unlighted country road and drove uphill and downhill for more than an hour. She could see nothing but the road and the dark trees and hedges bounding it, and by the light of the carriage lamps she could see her husband's face. She wished it would soften towards her now that they were coming closer and closer to his home, and to the long intimate future of their life together.

"Another time let it be morning when we arrive," she said suddenly.

"Why?" asked Dacre.

"It would be less alarming."

"What alarms you?"

"Ideas . . . the darkness. . . . Suppose no one in your home likes me? Suppose they all say . . . as those people at Venice did . . . why did he marry a little stupid German girl?"

"Who said so at Venice?" asked Dacre, and Rosamund told him what she had overheard.

"People will talk rubbish," he said indifferently. "We are nearly there now. In two minutes you'll see the gate."

She missed the words of welcome that would have given her courage, she missed the clasp of his hand. As they entered the gates another drive began that in her anxiety seemed interminable. At last, set round with darkness, she saw a lighted house.

"It is very big," she said, for the lights seemed to stretch far away on either side of the central part, where every window blazed a welcome to them. The next moment the carriage stopped. Dacre helped her out, and Joan put both arms round her. Rosamund looked back for Dacre, but he did not see her.

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It was Joan who took her across her husband's threshold. When Dacre followed them his first words were for Joan. But the next moment his wife was clinging to his arm. The butler had heard the carriage arrive, had come into the hall, and, as it seemed to Rosamund, had brought a whole pack of big, barking, jumping dogs with him. Most of them rushed up to Dacre and Joan, but one huge, alarming creature, with curly hair and no tail, bundled against Rosamund, stood on its hind-legs, and tried to put its paws round her neck. She fled towards her husband with a shriek.

"Oh, it's the puppy," said Joan. "Isn't he sweet? He only wants to put his paws round your neck, Rosamund."

"I would rather he didn't," said Rosamund, holding fast to Dacre's arm.

"Don't you like dogs, then?"

"Very much," said Rosamund, trying to escape from the attentions of a lively fox-terrier. "But I am not used to so many at a time."

Dacre laughed.

"Come away from them," he said, and he led Rosamund into one of the rooms opening on to the hall.

"This is Joan's room," he said. "If we can find a chair without a cat or a dog on it, you shall sit by the fire and get warm."

"I have ordered tea in here," said Joan's soft voice behind them; "I thought you would like some after your long, cold drive."

Dacre had picked up two cats from a chintz-covered easy-chair and pushed it close to the blazing fire for Rosamund. A huge blue Persian cat had gone to meet Joan, and when she sat down on the

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sheep-skin rug a family of kittens shook themselves awake and began to scamper round her. The room was airy and pleasant, with a long, low window opening into the garden. But it was not at all tidy. The sofa was heaped up with books and magazines; the grand piano stood open, and was strewn with music, and on the top of a tall book-case . . . Rosamund rubbed her eyes, and thought she must be dreaming . . . on the top of the bookcase . . . with solemn folded wings . . .

“Are those birds up there?” she asked.

“They are hens I brought up by hand,” said Joan. “They like sleeping here better than in the hen-house, and if I leave the window open they come in.”

“I forgot to tell you that Joan turns the house into a menagerie,” said Dacre.

Rosamund wondered whether her husband liked the animals about, or only tolerated them. She had never seen an untidier room, and Joan looked untidy too. She had been out in the wind, and her hair was rough. She wore a cockled tweed skirt, and the affectionate fox-terrier had left muddy paw-marks on her blouse. But as Rosamund sat by the fire and noted these things her oppression of spirit died away. It was impossible to feel afraid of Joan, or to resist the easy-going atmosphere of her room. Presently tea came, and she watched the quiet servants set it out, and wondered at the variety of cakes. The china was old Crown Derby; the silver was old too, and very bright. Rosamund's thoughts flashed back to the afternoon coffee in her father's bleak dining-room, the rolls heaped anyhow on a japanned bread-tray, the thick cups, the clatter made by old Luise. Presently, when Joan had left them, she looked across the hearth at her husband.

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"Are you glad to be in your own country again?" she said.

"I think I am," said he. "But I was very happy in Germany as long as your father lived."

This allusion to her father gave Rosamund pleasure.

"Do you remember the first time I saw you, when you helped me light the fire? And that other time, when you took me to the Christmas fair and gave me my little green watch?"

"I remember very well."

"I was not a bit afraid of you then," she said dreamily.

"No," said Dacre. "As a child you had some sense."

"But I was not married to you then," said Rosamund.

"I wonder what I have done since our marriage to make you afraid of me?"

"Nothing. You are very kind . . . much too kind. But sometimes I want to say something I know you won't like, and then I feel afraid."

"Then why say it?"

"Because it is on my mind. I wish to go back to Germany."

"I know you do," said Dacre. "Unfortunately, it is impossible."

"How could you know?" said Rosamund, looking baffled and rather vexed. "It only came into my head just now."

It was not necessary for Dacre to speak. His direct glance reminded her of the waiting-room at Bertholdsruhe and of her panic-stricken flight from him.

"It is for your sake that I wish it," she went on. "You would be much happier without me . . . you

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and Joan. I have only come into your life to spoil it. Why don't you let me go?"

"You're tired," said Dacre. "Come upstairs and see your rooms."

"I'm not tired," said Rosamund.

"Then you're silly. For better, for worse, you are my wife. You are going to live with me, and not anywhere else."

"I don't want to live anywhere else," cried Rosamund; "but I think it's rather hard on you."

"It's hard on both of us," said Dacre. "But as it is quite beyond recall, the less we think of it and talk of it the better. Here comes Joan with a cat on each arm. She shall take you upstairs."

XXI

JOAN led Rosamund into a big bedroom on the first floor. The curtains were drawn, the fire was burning, and Rosamund's big trunk had been unpacked and carried away.

"We need not dress for half an hour," said Joan, putting her young sister-in-law into an easy-chair near the fire. "Would you like to rest, or shall we talk?"

"Oh, stay and talk. I want you to tell me things. I have never been in England, although my mother was English. Are you really going to put on another dress at this time of night? And shall I?"

Joan glanced at the bed and saw a white voile skirt put out and a white silk blouse made high in the neck and with long sleeves.

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"That will do for to-night," she said. "Of course, you will want evening dresses."

"Every evening? At home? When we are by ourselves?"

"Yes."

"One reads of it in English books; and at the hotel, whenever she was going to the theatre, Mrs. Eastwood came down to dinner . . . so . . ."

With an expressive little sweep of her hands, Rosamund described Mrs. Eastwood's daily *déballage*.

"Did you like Mrs. Eastwood?" said Joan. "She is our nearest neighbour."

Rosamund made a slight grimace.

"I like her . . . oh yes. . . . She's what you call 'a good sort.' . . . But I don't like her clothes . . . and your brother asked her to buy me clothes. I am not a young man, and I have not the least desire to resemble one."

Joan laughed at the girl's whimsical tone, and with some inward surprise noted the flash of fun and mischief in her eyes.

"I suppose you will find a good many things strange at first . . . the housekeeping . . ."

"I am not to keep house," said Rosamund quickly. "Your brother has said so to-day. He wishes you to go on with it."

"But shall you like that?" said Joan, rather startled.

"I shall look on," said Rosamund; and then she adroitly came back to the question of clothes.

But Joan found her brother alone in the drawing-room when she went down to dinner, and told him at once that she expected to put the management of the house in his wife's hands. He would not hear of it.

"Either we will go on as we are," he said, "or I

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will get a housekeeper . . . whichever you please . . . but I would rather go on as we are."

"So would I," said Joan, "if you are quite sure Rosamund will not resent it."

"I am quite sure," said Dacre; "she would feel lost."

Joan thought her brother was making a mistake. It was impossible that the bride should like to be dethroned in this way. But for the present she had said what she could.

Dinner seemed a stately meal to Rosamund, although she was shrewd enough to perceive that it was not very well served, and not at all well cooked. The dining-room was large and panelled with old oak. There were family portraits against the panels, and there was fine old silver on the table and sideboard. There were white chrysanthemums in honour of the bride; there were hothouse grapes and a pineapple for dessert. But when Rosamund unfolded her napkin she saw two holes in it, and the name marked in ink in one corner. The soup was wine and water, the sauce was flour and water, the spinach was coarsely cut. She watched her husband, and wondered whether he minded such things; but she could not discover that either Joan or he observed them—at least, they made no sign until the servants had left the room. Then Dacre turned to his sister and asked if she still had the same cook.

"Yes," she said.

"She can't cook," said Dacre.

Joan looked surprised, but in no way troubled. She smiled sweetly at her brother and got up from table.

"In future you must get up first," she said to Rosamund, as they crossed the hall together, "especially

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when people are there; you must remember about it. But perhaps, as your mother was English, you know our ways."

"No," said Rosamund; "she died when I was a child, and I was at school till last October. I am glad you are here to tell me. If you were not I should make mistakes, and then every one would laugh, and that would not be pleasant for your brother."

"People won't laugh when they see how pretty you are," said Joan.

"Am I?" said Rosamund, colouring with pleasure. The two girls had reached the drawing-room hearth-rug, and they could see their reflections side by side in the old-fashioned mirror above the chimney-piece.

"I am as black as a crow," said Joan, "and you are like a lily, all white and gold. No wonder Will fell in love with you. He and I have always admired fair people."

"I admire dark ones," said Rosamund softly; "I think you are very pretty."

"But what do you think of Will?" said Joan, laughing, as she drew Rosamund down beside her on a sofa; "isn't he a dear?"

"Yes," said Rosamund inadequately. It had not occurred to her to regard her formidable husband as "a dear."

"You have known him for years, haven't you?"

"Yes; but not very well. He was usually in England when I was at home for the holidays."

"Was your father fond of him? I love to hear about Will, and he never talks of himself."

"My father thought more of him than of any one in the world. They were devoted to each other. Didn't you know that my father left all his affairs in

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his hands, and that they were writing a great book together? ”

“ Yes, I knew that. Oh! and years ago he told me what a charming child you were.”

“ Did he? ” said Rosamund.

“ I will show you a whole gallery of photographs of him at all ages,” said Joan impulsively. “ Perhaps you would like to have them framed for your own room.”

She fetched a lacquer box containing old photographs of Dacre. Many were faded, but Rosamund recognised in all her husband's features and expression, the direct look in his eyes, and the firm, well-shaped chin. She was still bending over a Rugby football team when he came into the room and asked what they were doing.

“ I am showing Rosamund photographs of you at all ages,” answered Joan; “ I am going to give them to her. Come and look at them, Will.”

She moved so as to make room for her brother beside his wife, but he did not sit down.

“ I should like some music,” he said, turning away. “ Won't you sing, Joan? ”

He opened the piano, and stayed near it until his sister began to sing. Then he went back to the sofa, and sat down beside his wife. Meanwhile Rosamund had gathered the photographs together, and put them back into the lacquer box.

“ Shall I sing the *Sapphische Ode*? ” said Joan. when her brother asked her to go on. “ I sang it at Fichtenstadt the night before your wedding. Do you remember? ”

Yes; they remembered. Rosamund did not lift her eyes. Dacre moved his dark head restlessly against the pillows of the sofa.

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"Sing something else," he said; "sing some Schumann."

"Don't you care for the *Sapphische Ode*?" said Joan, half turning in surprise, and as she bent over a music cabinet she hummed the opening bars.

Rosamund, without thinking, put one of her hands to her throat. She felt the cold, hard touch of the diamonds there; she looked up swiftly at her husband, remembering his kiss. But to-night his eyes were turned away.

"Now Rosamund must sing," said Joan, getting up when she had finished Schumann's *Widmung*. "Herr Witt said he had taught her. Come to the piano, Rosamund, and do him credit. What a teacher he must be! I quite lost my head and my heart to him. Will, do tell Rosamund to sing. I want to be reminded of Herr Witt."

But Dacre had walked to another part of the room, and was apparently interested in some Egyptian curiosities he must have known all his life. Rosamund said she was tired and out of practice, and would rather not sing to-night. Joan watched her brother as he paced up and down the long room. She thought he looked sad, and that Rosamund showed none of the gaiety and self-confidence natural in a young beloved wife. She began to wish herself away for their sakes, and she soon made some excuses and slipped from the room. When she had gone, Dacre sat down beside Rosamund again and began to talk of indifferent things—of the age and size of the house, of its history, and, incidentally, of Dacres who had owned Ormathwaite before him.

"Are you like any of them?" asked Rosamund.

"I believe I am like a great-uncle who was considered a disgrace to his family because he went into

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trade," said Dacre, laughing. "He quarrelled with his father about it, and they were bad friends for twenty years. Then they made it up, and the trader left a large fortune to his descendants. You owe your furs to him, really."

"Twenty years," said Rosamund, her mind fixing on the length of time a Dacre could take to forgive an injury. "I should not like to be bad friends with any one for twenty years. Could you bear a grudge as long as that?"

"I could bear one for ever," said Dacre. "There are things I would never forgive."

"What things?"

"Oh, well, treachery of any kind . . . some lies . . . not necessarily big ones."

A low sigh escaped Rosamund, but she said nothing, and just then Joan came back into the room. Next day, when the two girls were going over the house together, Rosamund found the portrait of which her husband had spoken, and looked at it anxiously.

"But that man has hard eyes as well as a hard chin," said Joan; "Will's eyes are kind."

"They can be hard when he is not pleased," said Will's wife.

"But Will is so easy to please," said Joan.

In some ways Rosamund perceived that her husband really was easy to please—at least, he put up with Joan's happy-go-lucky housekeeping more good-humouredly than most men would have done. The house was a large one, requiring a capable mistress or housekeeper, and a proper staff of well-trained servants to keep it in order. But Joan had lived there for years as the three of them lived there now, occupying a few rooms, roughly comfortable, and quite content. Joan saw the cook upstairs

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every morning for five minutes, and spent the rest of the day at the piano or out of doors with her dogs. She had no notion of time, and domestic mishaps never vexed her. Her servants stayed for ever, but as she was unpunctual and untidy, they were unpunctual and untidy too. All the rooms in use were overrun by animals, and the footman valeted dogs better than he waited at table.

Rosamund, being only nineteen and very impressionable, took colour at first from her new surroundings. She ran about out of doors with Joan, took lessons from Joan in riding and driving, came in late for meals, and often looked untidy. When neighbours from far and near came to call on the bride they were either told she was not at home or taken in to see two young ladies who had not looked at a glass since breakfast, and had been out in the winter winds all day. They could not hear what the young ladies said for the barking of dogs, and they could not sit down on the comfortable chairs because cats had found them comfortable first.

Old Lady Lavington was met at the drawing-room door by a large white owl that swooped lazily down towards her from the ceiling, and she was so much startled that she fled, never even leaving her card. Mrs. Eastwood walked over one day with her favourite Aberdeen, and he took on two of the Ormathwaite dogs. There was such a noise in the hall that Dacre came on the scene, and found an excited heap of dogs and ladies amongst the ruins of a Nankin vase. Rosamund hung on to the fox-terrier that had adopted her when she first arrived, and was valiantly trying to take Mrs. Eastwood's advice and bite his tail. But she was laughing too much to be successful. Dacre got hold of him by the collar, Joan sat down

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suddenly with her bob-tail puppy in her arms, Mrs. Eastwood picked up the Aberdeen and shook him. The dogs and the ladies were happy, and the ladies were too breathless to speak. When Mrs. Eastwood did speak she created consternation.

“There are wheels,” she said; “callers!”

Joan uttered a little cry of dismay as the bell rang. Rosamund looked at the broken china and overturned chairs. Her cheeks were burning, and Joan's back hair was coming down. The only thing that supported her was Joan's composure as she went to meet the tall, well-dressed woman now advancing slowly across the hall. Rosamund could not feel composed. She wished she could get behind a screen and hide there. She had been about six weeks in England now, and she had come to the conclusion that all Englishwomen were good-humoured, that they wore clumping boots, did their hair anyhow, and were neither neat nor elegant. But Mrs. Fitzurse upset her conclusions. The cut of her skirt, the tilt of her hat, the puffs of her hair, the fripperies hiding her rather scraggy neck, were all just what they should be, and cried shame on the three ragamuffins confronting her. She did not look at all good-humoured, and Rosamund felt sure that as she crossed the hall the shortcomings of Ormathwaite jumped to her eyes. Joan led the way into the drawing-room as soon as she could, and saw with some faint annoyance that the fire was out and the hearth very untidy. As it was bitterly cold she proposed that they should go to her room, so they all trooped across the disorderly hall again, and Mrs. Eastwood's Aberdeen tried to kill one of Joan's cats. When he had been hauled off and there was a lull, Joan rang for tea, but no tea came. Dacre had

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managed to vanish before Mrs. Fitzurse entered, and Rosamund heard her ask after him.

"I knew him very well as a boy," she said, "but he has chosen to bury himself all these years. . . ."

This attracted Rosamund's attention. It had not occurred to her that in the neighbourhood of Ormathwaite Fichtenstadt would be regarded as a tomb. She knew that Betty and Christian Witt would consider Ormathwaite a tomb.

"He has come here to bury himself," said Joan. "He is hard at work on his book."

"Has he become quite unlike every one else?" said Mrs. Fitzurse, examining Rosamund through her starers and seeming to address her.

"I think he was born unlike most of us," said Rosamund; "he is so clever."

"Clever!" said Mrs. Fitzurse, repeating the word as if she thought there was something slightly improper about it; "he used to sit a horse very well."

"He can do that still," said Joan; and then Mrs. Fitzurse got up to go. Joan asked her to wait for tea, and her glance of refusal managed to convey her belief that she might wait a long while and get none, and that when it arrived it would not be worth having.

"She always comes when we are untidy," said Joan regretfully, as she rejoined the others.

"She could hardly help that," said Rosamund; "we are always untidy."

"I detest cats," said Mrs. Eastwood, picking up Joan's Persian and petting it. "The moment she entered the hall I knew my hat was awry and my boots muddy. Her glances are as offensive as a mirror."

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Rosamund said nothing more just then, but she made up her mind that in future she would look after the drawing-room fire herself every afternoon.

XXII

SOCIALLY speaking, Ormathwaite was in a dull neighbourhood. When Rosamund had been there three months twenty or thirty people had called, and there had been a few solemn dinner-parties in her honour. Otherwise nothing had happened. Dacre was so busy with his book, his plans for a new laboratory, and the management of his property, that his wife and sister hardly saw him except at meals or for a short time after dinner. Rosamund sometimes wondered what sort of life would lie before her if Joan ever married; but after three months of such social intercourse as the neighbourhood afforded, she had not seen any one that Joan could marry. The few men about were husbands already, or over sixty, or under eighteen. She heard people talk of Mrs. Eastwood's brother, Frank Ilchester, and whenever she drove to Whincliffe she passed his gates. But he was spending the winter in the South of England. Then there was Mr. Sidmouth, an unmarried curate who tried to play the piano. As a man and a curate he was well enough, but as a musician he was not to be endured. Besides, he was two years younger than Joan.

Rosamund considered that she knew all about English country life now. She had returned calls with Joan, seen various interiors, and discovered

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that all English housewives were not as harum-scarum as her sister-in-law. When she dined with the Eastwoods there were no holes in the table linen, and when other people were surprised by visitors their rooms were presentable, and their raiment too. These facts impressed her, but she still ran rather wild, came to table with wind-blown hair and wet skirts, and even took to twisting her hair in a loose knot because Joan did—and Joan could do no wrong. But the first time she appeared with it so Dacre asked her what she had done to herself.

“Don't you like it?” she said.

“Not at all . . . for you.”

He was leaning back in a low chair and she was standing on the hearth-rug, and she perceived that though he wore old clothes, he looked well groomed. She needed no glass to tell her she did not.

“The old way took some time,” she said; “I can do this in two minutes.”

“So I should think,” said Dacre. He looked at her more attentively, and then he said: “There is a button off your coat and there is mud on your skirt, although there is no mud in the roads to-day. Whose business is it to attend to your clothes?”

“I suppose it is my own,” said Rosamund uncomfortably.

“But you have no time to do it. Then we will get you a maid. We ought to have thought of it before.”

“I don't want a maid.”

“But your clothes do . . . evidently.”

“I did not think you ever noticed such things.”

“I don't . . . as a rule,” said Dacre; and that evening he told Joan that he wished her to engage a maid to wait on Rosamund and herself.

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"Of course we ought to have one," admitted Joan; "but we don't like the idea."

"Perhaps you would rather have two," said her brother. "I am sure Rosamund could employ one, if it is only to brush her hair."

"I have sewn on that button, and sent down my muddy skirt," said Rosamund.

She thought he might see for himself that she had done her hair carefully and put on a gown she had never worn before.

"I hate maids," said Joan, sitting down beside her brother and putting her arm through his. "I never felt happy till I got rid of mine two years ago. She used to sniff at my clothes."

"You can't be surprised at that," said Dacre; "I do myself."

Joan had her head on her brother's shoulder now and was smiling contentedly. He was smiling a little too, as if her coaxing affection pleased him.

"What do clothes matter, anyhow?" she went on. "Besides, how could any one look prettier and daintier than Rosamund looks to-night? and if your wife does you credit, what does your sister signify?"

"It is the first time that Rosamund has looked tidy for weeks," said Dacre, "and the state of the house matches the state of your wardrobes. The meals are never in time, the cooking is bad, the rooms are in confusion, the fires are not kept in. . . . By the way, I have given George notice . . . we must find a new footman."

"Why?" said Joan, looking distressed at once. "His mother is such a nice woman!"

"He disobeyed my orders . . . twice. The first time I forgave him, the second time I told him to go."

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"Poor George!" said Joan.

"When you look out for a maid and a footman you had better look out for a capable housekeeper too," said her brother.

"Of course I know I'm a bad housekeeper," said Joan. "But we are very happy."

"We may be happy," said Dacre; "we are not comfortable. At least, I am not. I like order . . . and some idea of time, Joan."

"But you have never said so before," observed Rosamund.

"I am saying it now, once for all," explained her husband; "I made up my mind last night."

Rosamund and Joan looked at each other. There had been a dinner-party at Ormathwaite last night, but the ladies of the house had not been dressed in time to receive the first arrivals. When they got downstairs they found that the drawing-room lamps had been smoking, and the windows opened to let out the poisoned air. Dinner was half an hour late and every one got rather chilly, and when they went into the badly-lighted dining-room that was chilly too. Then old Lady Lavington sat down on a cat curled up on her chair, and the cat objected. The dogs, who came to dinner every night, saw no reason why they should be excluded to-night, and bolted after George the first time he unwarily left a door open. The puppy made one of his sudden rushes at Joan, caught Major Eastwood's elbow on the way, and upset his glass of champagne over Joan's gown. Then, though the dinner was not really worse than usual, it seemed a good deal worse when it was offered to friends. Rosamund looked at her husband from time to time, and wondered if he was as blind as he appeared to be.

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"Everything went wrong last night, I know," said Joan. "The fish was dreadful, wasn't it?"

"Not worse than the grouse," said Dacre. "I happened to be in the hall when Major Eastwood arrived, and I heard him say to his wife, 'H . . . m! no grouse for me to-day.'"

"Mrs. Fitzurse left it on her plate, and said to Sir John D'Arcy Demain that she didn't agree with Guinevere," chimed in Rosamund. "I knew what she meant, but Sir John didn't."

"I wonder what makes creams stringy?" said Joan.

"What makes sauces lumpy, and meat tough, and soup thin?" said her brother.

"Look at Rosamund!" cried Joan. "She is laughing at us. Perhaps she knows all about it, and yet you won't let her keep house. Perhaps she likes house affairs, and I hate them. When I'm married I mean to live in a hotel with five dogs and a piano."

"Do you know anything of housekeeping?" said Dacre to his wife.

"I know more than Joan. Of course, that isn't saying much."

Joan jumped up, seized her sister-in-law by the hands, and pushed her gently into the place she had just vacated.

"I'll never order a dinner for either of you again!" she cried. "You're an ungrateful pair! Settle it as you like, but don't count on me for another day."

She ran out of the room before Rosamund had time to speak or to move from the position in which she found herself. Her head actually touched her husband's shoulder, her arm lay rather stiffly across his. He neither spoke nor stirred even when she lifted her arm and moved a little further off, but she

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saw with pain that his expression had changed. The half-lazy, laughing good-humour with which he had listened to Joan had vanished now. His face was set in tenser lines, and though his wife's laces touched him, though the scent of the flowers she wore must have reached him, though for a shamefaced instant she had left her arm on his, he would not meet her eyes.

The pause before he spoke was brief, but it was long enough for Rosamund to feel aflame with hope, and then chill with disappointment. He was going to be kind and cool and friendly again, as he always had been since their marriage, and she would have to answer in his key, and pretend that the terms he dictated were pleasing to her.

"Well, Rosamund," he said, "which is it to be? Shall I get a housekeeper, or will you try your hand at things?"

"I should like to try," she said. "I have been longing to try ever since I came."

"I wonder how you will begin?"

"I know exactly how I shall begin. I shall go downstairs to-morrow morning, and I shall look at the back-kitchens."

"What for?"

"I wish this cook to go. What do you pay her?"

"Forty pounds."

"Aunt Betty pays twelve, and her cook can cook. I should not like to live in this country if I was poor."

"We have never gone into the question of money yet," said Dacre, with a note of self-reproach in his voice; "and you have never come to me for any. I ought to have thought about it."

"I should like a little," admitted Rosamund.

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"Last time I went to Whincliffe I had to borrow half a crown from Joan for some stamps."

"My dear child! why didn't you tell me? You had better have an account of your own at the bank, and a cheque-book of your own. Joan must tell you what her system has been."

But it turned out that Joan had had no system. Her brother had paid in a lump sum to her account when it occurred to her to ask for it. Sometimes she had spent her own money on household expenses, sometimes she had spent her brother's money on frocks and journeys. She had never kept any accounts—she said she considered them waste of time. So for the next few days Rosamund went into her husband's room every evening, and he arranged their household figures and affairs. Dacre found that the art of "home-making" was the one for which his wife had capacity, and that she was going to succeed rather notably. Of course, she made mistakes at first, the mistakes of a foreigner. Some of the servants left because they did not like the change of mistresses. The cook gave notice at once, as Rosamund had hoped she would. But the young wife stuck to her guns, and insisted on the reforms her husband desired. She liked to be busy in this way, and she liked to have little excuses for approaching Dacre and consulting him. He never again had to tell her that she looked untidy.

"Rosamund is getting as vain as a peacock," said Joan. "Whenever she goes into Whincliffe now she buys fashion-books."

"The results are very pleasing," said Dacre, and Rosamund lived on this expression of approval for weeks. One night when she put on a gown that her new maid had altered cleverly for her, she took

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courage from her own reflection, and without stopping to think, ran down to Dacre's room. The one he sat in had always been the library of the house, and was lined with books. A smaller one opened out of it, and this he had fitted up in a temporary way as a laboratory. He was planning to build himself better work-rooms when the summer came. He looked surprised to-night when Rosamund appeared, for she had never gone in at this hour before. He was ready for dinner and was reading, and his first thought was that he had not heard the gong, and that she had come instead of sending to tell him. But he glanced at the clock and saw that dinner would not be ready for five minutes. Then he glanced at Rosamund. She looked half uncertain of her reception, and yet there was a sort of innocent determination in her manner as she sat down opposite him.

"Well?" he said in a way he meant to be encouraging, for he thought she must have something special to say. But his tone of interrogation seemed to disconcert her.

"I only came in," she said lamely. "This is my new frock that Gibson has altered. I put it on because Mr. Ilchester is coming to dinner."

"Do you want to turn his head, then?" said Dacre, smiling.

It was a filmy gown; it showed Rosamund's lovely neck and arms; it was pale sea-green.

"Should you like Parmese violets with it?" said Rosamund.

"It looks very nice as it is," said Dacre, his attention fixing itself more on his wife's eyes than on her draperies.

"Then I won't have the violets. Perhaps you don't like artificial flowers?"

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"I have never considered the question."

"I wish we could grow Parmese violets. There is plenty of glass and heat. Do you think we could?"

"I know nothing of such things. Why don't you tell Dobbs to try?"

Rosamund looked at her husband wistfully.

"How kind you are!" she said; "whatever I ask for you give me."

"Some things are easy to give."

"Some things are easy to ask."

Dacre as he spoke had glanced at the clock and got up. It was time to go into the drawing-room to Joan and their guest.

"Have you something to ask?" he said.

The gong sounded as she went up to him.

"I want you to admire my gown," she said.

"I do . . . immensely?"

"Does it suit me?"

He opened the door for her to pass out before him.

"You look charming," he said.

As Rosamund walked across the hall she wished she could run away and hide. She had deliberately made love to her husband, she had approached him with the coquetry of voice and glance an innocent woman has at her command, and he had not responded. When he told her she looked charming his air had been sedate and his eye ironical. He had seen through her tactics, and frustrated them because his indifference was not counterfeit, but tragically real.

"When Dr. Müller is annoyed with Beate he throws a plate at her and has done with it," she said suddenly to her husband in an undertone. "I suppose you would call him a savage?"

"I should," said Dacre naturally, rather puzzled by this abrupt introduction of irrelevant matter. As

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he spoke they were passing the portrait of the trading Dacre he resembled, and Rosamund lifted a haughty chin towards it.

"I would rather have to do with Dr. Müller than with a man who bears a grudge for twenty years," she said.

XXIII

ROSAMUND had a light in her eyes and a colour in her cheeks. She talked with more vivacity than usual all through dinner, and Frank Ilchester gazed at her with the rapt look on his youthful features that once upon a time Joan had seen there when he gazed at her. To watch it made Joan feel uneasy, for she knew from experience what it portended.

Frank Ilchester had inherited a small property from an uncle too soon for his own good. The management of it gave him something to do, but not enough. He had many idle hours on his hands, and most of these he occupied with falling in love. His sister, Mrs. Eastwood, laughed at him mercilessly, but he always confided in her. She had been obliged to tell him she never felt sympathetic till tea-time, because he used to come round after breakfast when she was busy with her house, her children, and her animals. He had grown up rather out of reach of Ormathwaite, and as it happened had never met Joan Dacre until he came to live at Wangrave. The day after he first heard her sing he had asked his sister if she thought he could honourably transfer his affections from Miss D'Arcy Demain to Miss Dacre. As Miss D'Arcy Demain had just become engaged to Sir Richard

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Chichester, Mrs. Eastwood could not understand her brother's scruples, until he explained that his motto for a man was "one love, one life," and that he feared lookers-on might think he was falling a little short of it. As the whole countryside had watched his vain courtship of Miss D'Arcy Demain, this seemed likely, but Mrs. Eastwood did not admit it. She would have been thankful to see her brother steadied by a marriage with Joan Dacre, and she tried to bring it about. But though Joan liked the impressionable boy, she had no idea of giving herself into his unstable hands. She could not be unkind to any one, so perhaps at first she misled him a little. His passion had waxed fast and furious. He developed a voice and sang duets with her. He followed her to London and accompanied her to concerts. He proposed to her whenever she unwarily gave him a chance, on the moors, in the drawing-room, at last in the Twopenny Tube. As they emerged from the lift they had parted, she greatly distressed, and he, to all appearances, ready to drown himself at once. His mournful face as he bade her farewell had haunted her. But he had given her his word not to do anything desperate, and three months later Mrs. Eastwood told her that Frank had met a pretty American in Surrey, and that he talked of selling his land and settling in the South of England. Towards the middle of May, Frank had turned up at home again a pronounced misogynist. His kind heart had weighed less with the incomparable Hattie than a coronet, and she was now the Countess of Wroxham.

Frank's new views had been ardently held and promulgated for three weeks when he accepted Joan's impromptu invitation, given on the Whincliffe road,

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to dine at Ormathwaite to-night and make the acquaintance of the new sister-in-law. He had been away when the Eastwoods gave their dinner-party in honour of the bride, and he had only heard his sister say that Dacre had brought home a German wife, and that the hall at Ormathwaite was less like a poultry-yard than it used to be. Frank did not expect to be attracted by a German. The word had no elegant or agreeable associations in his mind. If he had looked forward at all, he would have expected something stolid and uncouth. But he accepted Joan's invitation because he delighted in Joan, and was sick of sulking at home. He knew Dacre slightly too, and when he went into the drawing-room at Ormathwaite he expected to enjoy himself. He accosted Joan as cheerfully as if he had never lain awake at nights for her sake, and was telling her about Hattie's wedding when his host and hostess came hurriedly into the room. Then he found himself leading Rosamund across the hall, and making up his mind that when a man saw reddish-gold hair he forgot light brown. Hattie's hair had been light brown. But who was Hattie? What was she in comparison with this star risen so suddenly and radiantly on his firmament? Her eyes were like lakes at even, he said to himself; her smile magnetised him, her voice made music. He looked at Dacre, and wondered at his calmness. Once she spoke to her husband, and he did not hear. He was engaged at the moment in carving a duck, and she had to repeat what she said. He looked up then, and listened to her proposal with a judicial air, and raised objections to it. The curmudgeon! She wanted to make a rock-garden in a place that her husband wanted for other purposes, and he did not yield his point. By the time dessert

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was on the table Frank would have turned all his acres into a rock-garden if it would have pleased her.

"What does Mr. Ilchester do?" said Rosamund when she was alone with Joan after dinner.

"He looks after his land."

"But he has been away all the winter."

"Yes."

Rosamund looked pensively at her sister-in-law. She felt concerned for Joan's establishment in life, although she dreaded Joan's departure from Ormathwaite.

"Of course he is very young," she said. "Compared with William he seems a boy."

"He will always be a boy compared with Will," said Joan.

"But he seems a nice boy. Is Wangrave a pleasant house?"

"It might be made so."

Directly Frank came into the drawing-room he sat down beside Rosamund, and asked her to come to Wangrave and look at his rock-garden. He admitted that it was not worth looking at.

"But you might give me some ideas," he said.

"I have none," said Rosamund. "I never even saw a garden of any size till I came here. But Joan and I have been reading a book about rock-gardens, and now that the warm weather has come we thought it would be amusing to make one."

"Mine has been neglected for years. It wants remaking and enlarging. I wish you and Miss Dacre would come to Wangrave and take it in hand."

Rosamund rose to this bait like trout to mayfly. The young man was not quite what Joan's husband should be. He was very young, and compared with Dacre's dark, strong face his fair one looked weak.

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But he was likeable, well off, and a near neighbour. Rosamund knew by this time that English country life does not provide a girl with much choice of mates, and she had not outgrown the belief that a married woman has a wider life than a single one. Time, she supposed, would change this boy into a man; it would probably bring him strength enough for the easy duties of his station. It never struck Rosamund that Joan might have weighed him already, and found him wanting. She had still to discover the delicate reticence many Englishwomen observe in such cases, even to their intimate friends.

"When can you come?" persisted Frank; and before he said good-bye an afternoon visit to Wangrave was arranged for the following week. He said that he would ask Mrs. Eastwood to meet the two ladies, and he suggested that Dacre should accompany them.

"I can't," said Dacre; "I am going to London that day."

Frank observed Rosamund look up in surprise, though she asked no question. It was Joan who asked how long he meant to stay.

"About three weeks," he said.

"Why don't you invite us to go with you? Three weeks of concerts and opera would be very agreeable. But if you want me you must wait till my concert is over."

"I can't wait."

"And you don't want me? Never mind; Rosamund and I will go up by ourselves in July. We will stay at the Cecil, and go to sales all day and the theatre every night. Would you consent to that, Will?"

"No," said Dacre, without any hesitation.

"When is your concert?" asked Frank.

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"The first Friday in July. I want a new sensation for it, and I can't think of one. I wish I could get Herr Witt."

"Who is he?"

"Some one splendid who wouldn't look at us," said Joan, sauntering to the piano and sitting down to sing. A little later Frank got up to go, and Dacre accompanied him into the hall. Rosamund was in the drawing-room by herself when her husband returned there. She had sat down on the hearthrug and taken her own little fox-terrier into her lap.

"What would happen to all the animals if Joan went away from Ormathwaite?" she asked. "Would she take them with her?"

"Is Joan going away from Ormathwaite?" he asked absently. He had seen Rosamund look up with pleasure when he came into the room, and she sat still on the rug in a way that invited him to stay and talk to her.

"I suppose she might marry any day."

"Then we should be left to ourselves."

"Yes."

"That would be unfortunate for you."

Rosamund stopped stroking her fox-terrier and met her husband's eyes, but there was no coquetry, no personal appeal in her glance now. She felt sure there never would be again. The dog put out one of his paws as a hint to her to go on petting him, and she did so silently.

"But Joan is not at all likely to marry at present," said Dacre with decision. "Of course, Ilchester is out of the question, and there is no one else about here."

"Why is Mr. Ilchester out of the question? He seems a pleasant young man."

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"Oh, he's pleasant enough," said Dacre, who had a shrewd suspicion of the dead and gone affair between Frank and Joan.

Rosamund came to the usual feminine conclusion that men know nothing of such things, even when they are clever men whom one cannot hope to persuade or venture to contradict. She had made up her mind that Joan ought to marry, and that it would be a happy arrangement for every one concerned to have her settled at Wangrave. Next day her thoughts were turned for the moment from match-making by an event of personal interest and importance.

Her new bicycle arrived from London, and it arrived when Joan was away at Whincliffe on hers. Rosamund had learned to ride a little, but she had never been any distance yet, and she had never ridden half a mile by herself. She told Dacre that it had come, and after lunch he went into the drive and watched her try it.

"You seem pretty safe," he said.

"I think I shall go to meet Joan," said Rosamund.

"Oh, you're not safe enough for that yet," said he.

"And I can't come with you this afternoon. I have to see Reynolds about those cottages."

He wheeled the machine back into the house for her, and Rosamund sat in the hall and stared at its attractive shape and brightness. She longed to get on again, and she could see no reason against it. She knew how to mount and dismount, and what more need a cyclist know? What her husband had said did not amount to a prohibition. If he thought it did, perhaps he would be angry, but Rosamund was in the mood to think even his anger more bearable than his indifference. She waited a little while,

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and then she took her bicycle into the drive again.

The drive was broad and winding and nearly level. A hundred yards from the gate it went slightly downhill, and when the pace of the machine suddenly increased, Rosamund jammed on both brakes in a hurry, brought it up with a jerk, and finally came down with the bicycle uppermost. But this trifling misadventure did not daunt her. She brushed the gravel from her clothes, and for the first time ventured into the open road. There was nothing in sight, and for about a mile she knew the way was level. Her memory of what came next was quite vague, for she had always travelled over the Whincliffe road in a carriage. At first she rode her machine slowly and cautiously, then with rapidly increasing confidence. She had heard Frank Ilchester say yesterday that cycling was an easy art, and she perceived that he was right. Her husband need not have distrusted her power over this enchanting winged machine. Now the road began to ascend and the wings grew leaden. It was a hill Joan walked, but Rosamund felt unwilling to get off, in case getting on again presented unforeseen difficulties. She pedalled with all her might, arrived panting at the top, and saw a long, steep descent ahead of her, with a flock of sheep at the bottom. Perhaps her misadventure in the drive had made her nervous; perhaps the strain of holding the brakes was too great for her strength; anyhow, the bicycle gathered speed in a terrifying manner, and in a moment Rosamund found herself dashing down towards the scattered, bleating creatures occupying the whole breadth of the road. The drivers saw her danger and tried to herd them aside. A cyclist riding towards her

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shouted something she could not hear. Then he dismounted, and as he did so he recognised Rosamund in the runaway.

XXIV

FRANK tried to drive the sheep out of Rosamund's way. The shepherds swore and aided him. But in a moment the bicycle charged right amongst them, and lay overturned in the road. Rosamund could never quite recall what happened. She felt scared, she heard shouts, she flew towards the crowd of bleating sheep, she was conscious of a merciless jar and of a soft wriggling body between herself and the hard ground. Then she found herself sitting in the hedge with Frank Ilchester. Her head ached, and she thought her bones were broken, but she was not sure. Frank was dusting her skirt with his handkerchief, and he looked as white as a ghost. The shepherds had gone on. The ruins of a bicycle lay in the road.

"Did I hurt the sheep much?" she said.

"Are you hurt yourself?" said Frank. "Can you walk as far as the house, do you think?"

"What house?"

"Mine. We are close to it here."

Rosamund still felt a good deal dazed, or she would have seen that they were just outside the Wangrave gates.

"I think I ought to get home and send for the doctor," she said.

"But you can't walk home . . . up that long, steep hill, and then another mile and a half nearly.

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If you could get to my house and rest, and have some tea, I'll send to Whincliffe at once for the doctor, and I'll drive you home in the dogcart."

It sounded reasonable, and Rosamund assented. There was a lodge just inside Wangrave gates, and Frank left both bicycles there, and sent a little boy on to the house to order tea. Then he offered Rosamund his arm, and led her slowly along the shady drive. She was too aching and unhappy to pay much attention to him. In so far as she could detach her thoughts from her bruises, she was wondering what her husband would say to her and her smashed-up bicycle. The prospect of his displeasure was disquieting now that it had become near and real.

"I wish you would let me carry you," murmured Frank suddenly. "I am sure you are not fit to walk."

She had begun to flag, partly through pain and partly because she was brooding; but this proposal was so unwelcome that it revived her.

"There is not the least necessity, thank you," she said. "I believe I could walk home. It is only my collar-bone, or shoulder, or something that is broken."

"Good heavens!" said Frank. "Is anything broken? What a terrible idea! We must get a doctor at once. Are you in great pain? I wish I knew what to do. Can you bear it?"

"How can I help bearing it?" said Rosamund. "Are we far from the house now?"

They were close to the house, she found, and when they got there Frank's elderly housekeeper received them. She took Rosamund upstairs, and helped her to get trim again, and Rosamund looked about her with great interest. She thought Wangrave would make a pleasant home for the lady Frank invited to

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queen it there. It was a plain large grey stone house with old-fashioned furniture, and rather bare, very well kept rooms. Rosamund could not imagine Joan's dogs and cats and birds running wild here as they still did at Ormathwaite. When she went into the prim Victorian drawing-room she found tea set out comfortably in a bay-window, and Frank waiting to receive her.

"I have sent to Whincliffe for Dr. Wain," he said. "And I have ordered the dogcart to come round in half an hour."

"It was lucky I met you," said Rosamund, taking a cup of tea from him.

"You ought not to be riding alone till you can ride better. You were risking your life to-day. When I think of it . . ."

"I don't know what my husband will say. It was my new bicycle."

"He won't think of the bicycle when he hears of your danger."

Rosamund languidly lifted her cup to her lips. Her right arm was so stiff by this time that she could only just manage this. The pain both in her head and her limbs was increasing, and she began to wish herself at home in bed.

"I'm afraid you feel very ill," said Frank, watching her anxiously. "Won't you stay here, and send for Joan to be here with you?"

For a moment Rosamund considered this invitation, and Frank saw the flicker of doubt in her eyes without guessing that Joan's name brought it there.

"A room could be ready in two minutes," he said, "and my old housekeeper is a first-rate nurse. I would send for Joan. I am sure the drive back would

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be bad for you if any bones are broken. At any rate, the doctor ought to see you first. Perhaps he will not let you move for weeks."

He bent persuasively towards her, his fair boyish face pink with eagerness; but while Rosamund hesitated, they both heard a man's voice in the hall, and before she spoke again her husband entered the room. She half rose to meet him, and then sank back amongst the cushions Frank had piled behind her. One glance at Dacre's face showed her that he had heard of what had happened.

"I met your man," he said to Frank as he shook hands. "He told me there had been an accident, and that my wife was here. I hope you are not much hurt, Rosamund."

"I don't know whether I am or not," she said.

"How did you get to the house?"

"I walked."

"Then I hope there is not much the matter," said Dacre; and he turned to Frank and thanked him for looking after his wife. Frank thought his manner wanting in sympathy, and he felt sure that Rosamund thought so too. She was looking at her husband as if she owed him an apology for being injured. Frank fumed at the notion, and wished he could keep the beautiful creature under his own roof. But those intangible influences that depend on temperament made it impossible to propose such an arrangement to Dacre. With his arrival the direction of things seemed to fall naturally into his hands. He asked Frank to let him have the dogcart at once, and arranged to send it back with the groom who would come for his horse. Frank glanced at Rosamund in the hope that she would speak of his invitation to her, but she did not open her lips. Then a servant

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came to say that the dogcart had come round, and Dacre got up to go.

"But the doctor will call here," ventured Frank.

"I think not," said Dacre. "I asked your man to say that we should be back at Ormathwaite if possible."

"Perhaps he will say Mrs. Dacre ought to have stayed here."

"Oh, I hope there isn't much the matter. By the way, where is the bicycle?"

"At the lodge . . . smashed up," said Rosamund.

Her husband helped her into the dogcart and they drove off together, while Frank stood at his door and watched them. If Rosamund had been his wife she might have smashed twenty bicycles if only she did not hurt her exquisite self. That was the tone Dacre should have taken from first to last, but he had fallen lamentably short of it. Certainly, when he arrived he had looked haggard with anxiety, and with the pace at which he had ridden; but he had allowed his looks to speak for him: his words had been unkindly inexpressive.

Meanwhile the lodgekeeper had produced the crumpled bicycle, and was helping Dacre tie it to the back of the dogcart.

"Will they be able to mend it?" asked Rosamund timidly, as they drove at a walking pace up the hill she had come down so disastrously a little while ago.

"I must have a look at it when I get back," said Dacre.

Rosamund waited for him to say something more, and waited in vain.

"Are you angry?" she asked at last.

"I should have been if you had hurt yourself."

"I have hurt myself. My head aches, and my

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shoulder aches, and my elbow is grazed horridly. Look at my sleeve . . . it is all cut near the elbow . . . and my new bicycle is smashed up. I wish you had never told me not to ride it."

Dacre stared at his horse's head.

"I don't understand," he said.

"It made me want to," she explained.

The horse had reached the top of the hill, and began to take the downhill grade, and then the level stretch of road, at a sharp trot. He was fresh, and for a little while Dacre had to attend to his driving. Then they turned into Ormathwaite. As they did so Joan overtook them on her bicycle.

"What has happened?" she said, slackening her pace, and looking at the broken machine and at Frank's dogcart.

"Rosamund tried to ride down Wangrave Hill, and collided with a flock of sheep," said Dacre.

"Is she much hurt?" said Joan anxiously. "What a mad thing to do, Rosamund! What put it into your head?"

"I'm afraid I did," said Dacre.

"Will! You knew she had never been on the road at all."

"Yes, I remembered that."

"Yet you let her ride alone . . . down Wangrave Hill! It sounds very unlike you."

Dacre made no further reply, and Joan, as she kept beside him in the drive, saw that something had gone wrong. When they reached the house he helped his wife down very carefully, but he left it to Joan to take her across the hall and upstairs.

"What is Will angry about?" said Joan.

"I suppose he is angry with me," said Rosamund.

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"Why should he be?"

"He had told me not to take my bicycle into the road."

"Then why did you do it?" said Joan, too much taken by surprise to be as discreet as usual.

"It's no use trying to please him," said Rosamund, also off her guard. "I thought I'd displease him for once and see what happened."

Joan pondered over this admission, but made no comment on it. When the doctor came his verdict was reassuring. No bones were broken, not even those that Rosamund said felt like it. He gave her a soothing draught, and advised her to stay in bed for twenty-four hours. In a couple of days she would be about again.

"Rosamund seems anxious about her bicycle," Joan said, as she sat at dinner with her brother. "Can it be mended?"

"I don't think so," said Dacre.

"It is a miracle she was not more hurt."

"Yes." He waited a moment, and then he said: "That man of Frank's is a fool. He frightened me badly,"

Joan thought her brother's face still showed traces of it. He was paler than usual, and all the lines of his face were rigidly set.

"Rosamund thinks you are angry," she ventured.

"I thought so too when I saw you."

"It would be odd if I was not," said he.

"I think she would like to see you," said Joan.

"She looks up whenever the door opens, as if she hoped it might be you, and I am sure she is disappointed when it is not. It is bad for her to lie there and fret."

"It is her own fault," said Dacre rather impa-

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tiently. "I told her not to venture into the road yet. Why did she go straight off and do it?"

"She did it to displease you," said Joan.

"Then she has achieved her object," said Dacre.

He poured out a glass of port before he spoke again. Joan fed the dogs with biscuits, and told Rosamund's fox-terrier that he should be taken up to his mistress when dinner was over.

"Are you quite out of your senses, and Rosamund too?" said Dacre suddenly. "Why should Rosamund seek to displease me?"

The fox-terrier made a bound into Joan's lap, and she began to stroke his head softly and regularly, which was what he desired and expected.

"Go and ask her why," she said to her brother. "Take Gee up with you. She wants him."

Dacre waited until Joan left the room, and then he followed her advice. Rosamund's windows were wide open, the thrushes and blackbirds were still singing, and the scent of hay came in from the Ormathwaite meadows. The fox-terrier was so delighted to gain admission that he went wild, and scampered from the bed to the floor and from the floor to the bed again.

"How are you now?" said Dacre. "I am glad there is nothing much wrong."

"So am I," said Rosamund. "It is more than I deserve, isn't it?"

"Much more."

"I am very sorry about the bicycle. Can't it be mended?"

"No."

"I should like to pay for it myself, and for a new one. If I bought no new clothes for a time I could. I know I have been rather extravagant about clothes

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lately. Somehow my German ones don't do over here. Why do you stand? Why don't you take that chair and sit down? If you wait you will see the moon rise behind Wangrave Crag. That is why the curtains are not drawn. I want to see the moonlight in the sky."

"I am not going to stay another moment," said Dacre. "Joan said you ought to sleep. But she seemed to think you had something to tell me."

"I have," said Rosamund; "but you have no ears to hear."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't mean anything."

Dacre looked at her and hesitated.

"Have you had your soothing draught?" he said finally.

To his surprise, Rosamund, who was never petulant, turned from him with a little cry of vexation and impatience.

"I had it an hour ago," she said. "The doctor brought it with him."

"Then you certainly ought to give it a chance and try to sleep," said Dacre. "Suppose you let me draw the curtains? You can look at the moon to-morrow."

She made no reply, and after waiting a moment he went to the window and shut the evening light from the room. But then he had to strike a match to find his way to the door. When he had opened it he called to the fox-terrier to come with him.

"I hope you'll be better to-morrow," he said to his wife.

Her response was inarticulate, and he did not try to interpret it; but he said to Joan that he thought Rosamund was a good deal shaken, and that if she

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had a temperature to-morrow they must get the doctor out from Whincliffe again.

“ I didn't think she seemed ill,” said Joan. “ She was unhappy because you were not pleased.”

Her brother glanced at her as if she had said something that passed his understanding. But he did not seem anxious to discuss it. He asked her to sing, and as he sat where she could see him, she knew that while she sang his thoughts were far away.

XXV

It was Sunday afternoon at Ormathwaite, and Rosamund was by herself in the garden. Joan had gone to take her class at the Sunday-school, and after that to have tea at the vicarage. Rosamund might have gone to the vicarage too, but she preferred the garden. The Vicar and his plain elderly sisters frightened her. They looked at her hair as if they thought it wicked, and they showed that her ignorance of parish matters scandalised them. She had not been able to tell them how mothers' meetings were conducted in Germany, or whether there was a G.F.S. there, or what was the average stipend of a curate. She had refused with alarm to teach in the Sunday-school, and though she went to church regularly, from the parochial point of view she did not take her proper place as Mrs. Dacre of Ormathwaite. Of course, as the Vicar's sisters often said to each other, this was not surprising. Rosamund was a “ foreigner ” and had not had the privilege of growing up amongst

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clothing clubs and district visitors. They could not help wishing that Mr. Dacre had brought a suitable wife to Ormathwaite. They feared that Rosamund was rather "flighty" in her ways. They had heard of the bicycle accident and the subsequent visit to Wangrave, and thought it "all of a piece." When the Vicar's sisters were young, Mrs. Dacre of Ormathwaite would not have moved out of doors in anything less dignified than a carriage and pair with two men on the box. Now her son's wife came tumbling down the hill on a couple of wheels, and had to be picked up by a shepherd and the young squire of Wangrave. The Vicar's sisters deemed it unfortunate that Mr. Dacre lived so much amongst his books and bottles, while his wife and sister ran wild. They had their own rigid ideas of a man's duty to his women-folk, and the master of Ormathwaite fell short of it.

Of course, no one in that far country neighbourhood had a suspicion of Dacre's real place in the world, or of the work he was doing. If he had lived in a Khirgiz camp he would have been as justly appreciated by his surroundings as he was at Ormathwaite. When he dined with the Royal Society he dined with men who knew his value and had some vision of his distinguished future; but when he dined with the Eastwoods or Mrs. Fitzurse they thought him agreeable, but remote. It is difficult for a man of Dacre's mental calibre not to appear remote amongst people whose interests were so far removed from his own. He had known most of his neighbours all his life, and he liked them well enough. They liked him uncommonly well, but it was for his name, his good looks, and his honest, steady nature. They were inclined to make a joke of his bottles and his new laboratory.

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In fact, he was as much alone with his ambitions as if he had lived amongst savages.

Rosamund sometimes wished her husband was what she called "an idle man," like Major Eastwood or Frank Ilchester. Of course, these gentlemen did not consider themselves idle; they pursued the usual occupations of their kind, and managed to get a good appetite for dinner every day. But Rosamund knew that Mrs. Eastwood could see her husband any time she pleased. The only books in his den were bound volumes of the *Badminton* and the *Field*; and when he wanted to write a letter he had to hunt round the house for some ink. He did not mind being interrupted, except when he was in the midst of a nap. As for Frank Ilchester, he would hang round Ormathwaite from morning till night if any one gave him the least encouragement. He had come up to Rosamund after church to-day and asked her if Joan and she would be at home this afternoon, and she had said that they would not. She was surprised that he asked, as he must have known that Joan took a class at the Sunday-school, and would afterwards go to tea at the vicarage. In the country every one always knew what every one else was doing, and talked about it.

Rosamund sat on a low stone stile dividing the garden from the copse, and she wished she had a companion who could talk. It was a clear, windy afternoon in June; some of the meadows were yellow with buttercups and some were sweet with hay. The copses were full of wild hyacinths; in the garden the azaleas were in flower, the oak leaves were still young, and the birds were still singing. The silence and the lifelessness of an English Sunday afternoon had fallen on Ormathwaite, and for a time Rosamund enjoyed the peace of it. No one was at work, no one

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was at play, no one was in sight anywhere. When she had been out an hour the stable clock struck three, and she wondered how she could occupy the two hours till tea-time. If she went indoors she could read or play the piano, but she did not feel inclined to do either. She did not feel inclined for anything within her reach that afternoon. Sometimes she felt homesick—homesick for Fichtenstadt, for the sights and sounds of its streets, for the familiar faces, rooms, and voices, for German music, even for German food. England was a very fine country, she said rather forlornly to herself, and compared with her old surroundings, Ormathwaite was a very fine house. She had more clothes and servants than she could ever have had at home; she had carriages and diamonds—all the heart of woman is supposed to desire. But in her heart none of these things took a paramount place. Sometimes she felt herself a sojourner in a foreign land, loved a little by Joan, accepted by her husband's friends, but not quite at home yet with them, wishing this afternoon for a magic carpet that should transport her quick as thought to Betty's pleasant parlour. At this very moment Christian Witt probably sat there and played Beethoven.

"What are you thinking of, Mrs. Dacre?" said Frank Ilchester's voice close by. "You look unhappy."

Rosamund looked a little less unhappy directly she saw him. She made room for him beside her on the stile before she answered his question, and she gladly began to talk about Fichtenstadt.

"I was thinking of my old home," she said.

"I hope you don't wish yourself back there."

"Sometimes I do. Sometimes I want my own

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people and my own country. I want the minster and the market-place, and the old, old villages and the peasants. Oh, I wish I could see an ox-waggon with timber, and hear the driver crack his whip! I wish I could have Hörchen with my coffee and a wood fire. I wish I could just shut my eyes and hear Christian Witt play. I wonder . . .”

“What?” said Frank.

“If my husband would let me go back with Aunt Betty?”

“Perhaps he would if you told him you were sick of us all,” said Frank moodily. “But is your aunt coming here?”

“Possibly,” said Rosamund.

From where they sat they could see the edge of the moor. The shadows chased each other across the steep face of it, and the sunlight showed each crevice in the great overhanging rock known as Wangrave Crag.

“I wonder why you came this afternoon?” said Rosamund. “I told you I should be out, and this is not the way to our front-door.”

“Dacre has given me leave to use the short-cut to the moor through his copse. It saves more than a mile. I am out for a walk.”

“I see.”

“Come as far as the Crag,” said Frank invitingly. “I will show you where the *Osmunda* grows.”

“Very well,” said Rosamund, after a moment's hesitation. “I have hardly ever been on the open moor.”

“Doesn't Dacre care about walking?”

Rosamund made some evasive reply. She did not care to say that her husband both rode and walked a good deal, but never invited her to go with him.

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"I must be back in time for tea," she said, when they had ascended the face of the moor and clambered some way along its ridge. They were still a good half-hour's walk from Wangrave Crag.

"Why?" said Frank.

She stopped to take breath and look at her watch.

"I can't come any further," she said. "You go on by yourself."

Frank looked both mortified and disappointed.

"You said you'd come," he pleaded. "What does tea matter? Have it later . . . when you get home."

But Rosamund had set her heart on getting home in good time for tea, and on having it alone with her husband. He always came in for a few minutes, and to-day Joan would not be there. She had denied herself to Frank this morning because she did not want a third person there, and she had started for the walk with the full intention of getting away from him as soon as she could.

"I can get back quite well by myself," she said. "You go on."

"Certainly not," said Frank, and he turned to accompany her. Rosamund could not pretend to be glad of his company, and she was determined not to ask him in to tea.

"My husband goes to London to-morrow for three weeks," she said. "You must come and dine with Joan and me sometimes. Are you engaged on Tuesday?"

Frank said he was never engaged when there was a chance of going to Ormathwaite, and that Joan had asked him to lunch there to-morrow. Perhaps Mrs. Dacre did not know that. Rosamund said she would be pleased to see him on both occasions, and she thought she had thereby made it easier to bid him a

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kind farewell just now. When they got to the garden wall again, she stopped and held out her hand.

"I'll see you through the garden and go back by the road," said Frank.

"Isn't it pleasanter through the copse?"

"Not when I should miss five minutes' walk through the garden with you."

Rosamund tried not to show her impatience uncivilly, and yet she knew that to dismiss him at her door would be against the hospitable tradition of the house.

"I'm going to hurry," she said. "I'm late as it is, and I want to catch my husband before the post goes out."

"You are forgetting," said Frank; "there is no post on Sundays."

He was persistent because he was unperceptive. If he could have seen that Rosamund wanted to be rid of him, he would have taken himself off at once. But he thought the delight he took in her society must find some response. Outside the house Dacre met them, and at once invited Frank in to tea. Rosamund preceded the two men into the hall where the tea was set, and gave her gloomy attention to the dogs. She had to pour out tea, but she hardly spoke at first, and Dacre asked if she felt tired.

"Mrs. Dacre wants to run away from us," said Frank. "It seems that we have not the fortune to please her. She wants to go back to Germany, she says, and see something called a minster and some one called Christian Witt. Who is Christian Witt, Mrs. Dacre? You said you wanted to hear him play. Is he a musician?"

"Yes," said Rosamund.

She was watching her husband's face with a sense

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of dull disappointment and vexation. She could read changes in it now that would have been imperceptible formerly, and she knew that its present want of interest amounted to disapproval.

"We are horribly dead-alive here, of course," Frank babbled on. "I don't wonder a stranger gets sick of it. If you don't take to sport, what is there? It's different for you, Dacre, because you've all your books and bottles. You've a hobby. But when I described Wangrave to Lady Wroxham, she said it must be a pleasant place to get away from eleven months in the year. In fact, she accepted Wroxham the same week."

"You're quite wrong," broke in Rosamund. "I'm not sick of the life here. I like it. I've been used to a quiet life. But, of course, I think of my old home sometimes, and of the people . . ."

Her voice broke slightly, and she stopped in distress. Frank saw that he had somehow vexed her, and got up to go. Dacre got up too, and said he would walk part of the way with him.

"I should like to come too," said Rosamund, seizing her chance.

Dacre made no objection, and the three set out for Wangrave by the road. When the husband and wife turned back towards home, Rosamund proposed to walk through the Ormathwaite woods.

"It is further," said Dacre.

"But it is pleasanter," said Rosamund. "It is such a lovely evening, and we never have a walk together."

Dacre opened the gate leading into the woods, and waited for her to pass through before him. His manner was not encouraging, but she trusted to the influences of the place to help her. They came to a narrow stream where she had often sat lately and

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watched the coming of summer, and she proposed to sit here now. It was a rushing north-country stream, a torrent in wet weather, a thread of foam in dry, with big rocks on either bank, and ferns and wild-flowers growing to its brim.

"I am tired," she said, finding her favourite rock. "Are you in a hurry to get back?"

"I have a good deal to do to-night."

"What time do you start to-morrow?"

"At eight."

"I had a letter from Aunt Betty this morning. I want to ask you about it."

Dacre had not sat down. He was leaning against a tree not far from Rosamund.

"She wants to come and stay with us. She would like to come at once. She writes from Paris."

Dacre took the letter his wife had extracted from a bag at her waist and read it reflectively.

"Well," he said when he had finished, "you must do as you please about it. I shall be away three weeks, so I may not see her."

"I should wish her to come. But I was not sure that you . . . I thought you were angry with her."

"Have you forgiven her, then?"

"I don't know what forgiveness means," said Rosamund, after a little hesitation. "I shall always think she behaved badly, but I don't want to carry on a quarrel for ever. I was not born in these dales."

"So when a woman has done you an injury, you will take her back into your affections directly she proposes to come. Is that what you mean?"

"She has not done me an injury . . . as things turn out," said Rosamund.

"She is by herself, I suppose," said Dacre, looking again at the letter, and apparently taking no notice

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of his wife's reply. "She proposes to come by herself."

"But, of course," said Rosamund; "who should come with her?"

Her husband's glance called the colour to her cheeks, and she rose in swift vexation and distress.

"That boy talked nonsense!" she cried. "I want to see Fichtenstadt and old Luise again. I don't want to see Christian Witt; indeed, I never give him a thought now."

"How did Frank know his name, then?"

"I said I should like to hear him play. I never dreamed he would repeat what I said to you and give you a false impression."

"Perhaps I had better speak plainly," said Dacre. "As long as Christian Witt is in Fichtenstadt I shall not allow you to go back there."

"I don't want to go back there!" cried Rosamund.

"It is as difficult to discover what you want as what you mean," said Dacre.

He was bitterly disappointed. He pictured her sitting amongst the sights and sounds of summer and thinking of Christian Witt. He had fancied her content at Ormathwaite; but she wished herself away, it seemed, and she could not keep the wish from her lips. Yet she said that her aunt had not done her an injury, and it was her aunt who had driven her here.

"But there is no difficulty about what you are to do," he added, turning towards home. "That was marked out for you when you consented to marry me."

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XXVI

ROSAMUND walked back to the house with a glow in her heart. Dacre had shown anger, and he had spoken with unusual hardness. His voice rather than his words had startled her to tears. So without effort or design she had disarmed him, and as they strolled slowly home his voice had gradually changed and his manner with it. He laughed at her because she trod the garden paths in fear and trembling lest she should come across a frog, and when she gave a start that threw her against him he drew her arm through his.

"You won't be away much more than a fortnight, will you?" she said just before they went in.

"Three weeks, I'm afraid. If I can shorten it a bit, I will. But you're not nervous, are you?"

"I am not nervous. I hope . . ."

"Come into my room; I want to give you a cheque. What do you hope?"

"It is Aunt Betty I think of. I wish you were to be here."

"Why?"

"Oh, to be responsible!"

"You must hold your own," said Dacre. "I leave you in command."

"I shall be glad when you come back. But I will hold my own. I can with most people. I wish I could with you. I believe you would like me better if I did."

"My dear child," cried Dacre, "I liked you well enough to marry you . . . what more . . ."

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"You have liked me less and less ever since," said Rosamund, with her eyes on the carpet.

"That is not true," said her husband. He was sitting at his writing-table, and had taken his cheque-book from a drawer. Before he spoke again he filled in a cheque, tore it off, and gave it to her. "In what way do you consider yourself oppressed?" he asked.

"In no way," said Rosamund hurriedly.

The waning light fell on his face as he turned towards her, and she saw the irony in his eyes that always both baffled and attracted her. But he said nothing more.

Next day he went to London, and Rosamund wrote to Betty, telling her to come when she pleased. Two days later a telegram announced Betty's arrival on the following morning at six o'clock. She evidently meant to come straight through from Paris, and travel from London by the midnight express. When the telegram was brought to Rosamund both Joan and Frank were there, but there was nothing unusual in that. On Monday Frank had come to lunch, and loafed about the garden all the afternoon. Next day he brought Rosamund some plants for her new rockery, and stayed to put them in. After lunch he had given her a lesson on Joan's bicycle, and assured her that if she would accept another lesson on the following day she would ride without touching her handle-bar by the afternoon. He had dined and spent the evening with the two young ladies, and now, on Wednesday afternoon, he was having tea with them in the garden. Joan had been obliged to absent herself a good deal, because the bob-tailed puppy was ill and required her attention. This was not what Rosamund wanted, but she did

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her best to entertain Frank, and said nothing to discourage his visits. She was rather surprised he took so little interest in the puppy's illness. When she suggested that he should visit the stables with Joan and give his opinion, he said he was sure he would have none, and that they ought to wire to Whincliffe for the vet.

"The train arrives at six," said Rosamund. "It is an hour and a half's drive. I must order the carriage at 4.15. I shall have to get up at four o'clock."

"What?" said the two English people simultaneously.

"I must go and meet her," said Rosamund. "Certainly I must go and meet her."

"I believe that if Will was here he would wire to Whincliffe for a cab to meet her. He would never let you drive all that way in the middle of the night. I should like to see York's face when you order the carriage."

"I might go on your bicycle," said Rosamund. "Would you lend it me?"

"Of course I would, but I won't . . . if you know what I mean. I'll lend it you at a reasonable hour . . . not at four o'clock in the morning."

"You don't know how easy it is to offend Aunt Betty," said Rosamund; and when tea was over she took Joan's bicycle into the road, and showed Frank that she now knew how to ride it down Wangrave Hill. Then she rode it into the village, and sent a telegram to some Whincliffe livery stables, as Joan had advised. She did not ask Frank to dine that night, and she went to bed at nine o'clock.

At four o'clock next morning Frank Ilchester was waiting with his bicycle at the top of Wangrave Hill,

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and at ten minutes past four he saw Rosamund gliding towards him.

"You!" she cried, as if she could hardly believe her eyes. "Do you expect some one by the six o'clock train, then?"

"Yes," said Frank, as he began to ride beside her.

"I stole out of the house like a thief," said Rosamund. "Isn't it a lovely morning? Why do we ever wait for the day to be stale? In future I shall often ride at this time."

"I will if you will," said Frank. "It's rippin'."

They were just beginning the descent of Wangrave Hill now, and Rosamund gave her whole attention to the management of her brakes. After this the gradient was easy for several miles, and as they rode they talked, chiefly about bicycles. Frank did not say a sentimental word, and his manner misled Rosamund, it was so frank and friendly. She had no suspicion that he had wasted most of Monday morning trying to get glimpses of her in the garden from the top of Wangrave Fell.

Although the mill hands were on their way to work already, Whincliffe itself seemed still asleep as they rode through it. The shops were shut, the blinds were drawn, and hardly any one was in the streets. Outside the railway-station they found the cab Rosamund had ordered, but no other was in sight.

"What will your friend do for a cab?" said Rosamund, when they had dismounted and were waiting on the platform.

"My friend?"

"I thought you came to meet some one?"

"I came to meet your aunt."

Rosamund was taking a bunch of roses from her

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bicycle basket, and as she did so the train steamed into the station. She had no time to answer Frank. She saw her aunt directly, and ran forward with her roses and an affectionate greeting. At the moment Betty stood for Fichtenstadt and all old associations, and she really felt glad to see her. Of course, eight months had not altered Betty, and it was the aunt who looked at the niece with swift perception of change. She expressed surprise at seeing Rosamund, and when Frank was presented she said she had not known that English people kept such early hours.

"We don't as a rule," said Frank. "In fact, I've never had a ride at this time of day before."

"Is Mr. Dacre here too?" said Betty to the young man.

Rosamund was speaking to the porter who had taken her aunt's hand luggage.

"He's in London," said Frank.

Betty, without seeming to do so, took his measure at once; noted his intimate friendly manner with her niece; wondered how near Ormathwaite he lived.

"So your husband is away," she said, when Rosamund and she had driven off together; for Rosamund had been obliged to admit that ten miles on a bicycle had been rather more than enough for her inexperienced muscles. Besides, as she explained to Frank, it was more polite to her aunt to go back in the cab.

"He is away for three weeks," said Rosamund.

"Then I shall hardly see him, for I have only come for three weeks. How unfortunate! Is your sister-in-law still with you?"

"Yes."

"Don't you find that rather trying?"

"No," said Rosamund; "I am very fond of Joan."

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"Why doesn't she marry?"

"She has never told me."

Betty looked contemplatively at Frank, who rode near the cab and talked through the window now and then. Then her glance returned to her niece.

"You have changed a good deal," she said. "You look more than eight months older. How do you like English life? Is it as dull as they say? Don't you miss the music? Christian Witt is in Paris, and he may go on to London. He plays better than ever. It has been a joy to hear him all through the winter. Do you get any music here . . . good or bad?"

"Joan sings to us," said Rosamund.

Betty's glance wandered towards the hayfields and the line of fells beyond them.

"More cows than artists, I presume," she said, with a little yawn. And then she began to talk about Fichtenstadt and the recent adventures of their various friends. But when they began to crawl slowly up a hill, Frank got off his machine and walked beside them.

"What are you going to do this morning?" he said. "You won't forget that I expect you all to tea at Wangrave this afternoon?"

Rosamund said she thought her aunt would be too tired to go out to tea, but Betty inquired where Wangrave was, and accepted Frank's invitation.

"It will be like a page from an English novel, I am sure," she said. "There will be a large, smooth piece of grass, and little tables, and hot cakes, and curates—will there not, monsieur?"

"We only have one curate," said Frank. "I'll get him if I can. The other things will be there all right."

"I set my heart on the curate," cried Betty, as

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they parted from Frank at the foot of Wangrave Hill. "I have always wanted to see something of English country life," she said to her niece. "How did you get through the winter? You look very well. You are no good at all as a letter-writer. You tell one nothing, and you don't even answer questions. If I asked you once how you got on with your house-keeping when you were first married, I asked you a dozen times. What a long drive you have! How many gardeners do you keep? If you were anything of a correspondent I should know all these things. I begged you to send me a photograph of the house, but you never did. What a big, rambling place it is! In Germany we should call it a palace. Really, you are a very lucky girl, Rosamund, to have married a home like this, and I suppose I gave you a jog towards it. There is Miss Dacre at the front-door. How badly she does her hair, and what *has* she got in her arms?"

"It is a pet goose," said Rosamund, who had left most of her aunt's questions unanswered. "Joan is always surrounded by animals."

A little later, when Betty came down to breakfast, she found her niece, Joan, and the old butler engaged in coaxing a magnificent peacock, who stood with his tail outspread in the middle of the table. With one or two strokes of it he had dealt ruin on either side of him. By the time he had been captured and fresh food and china brought it was nearly ten o'clock. Joan observed that she had a busy day before her.

"Don't forget that Mr. Ilchester expects us to tea," said Rosamund.

"He has promised me hot cakes and a curate," said Betty.

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Joan looked up with some surprise.

"Have you seen him already?" she said.

Betty helped herself to butter, and left her niece to reply. She could not detect embarrassment in Rosamund's manner, but she thought Joan received the story of the morning's ride with a want of comment that was noticeable. At lunch-time she said that she had to see Mrs. Eastwood that afternoon, and would come on to Wangrave with her. Betty and Rosamund must please not wait for her, as she might be a little late.

"Would you like to walk, or shall we drive, Aunt Betty?" said Rosamund.

"If you want me to keep my temper, you'll drive," she said. "I always lose it on a dusty road."

When Betty and Rosamund got to Wangrave they found Frank waiting about for them in front of the house. Mr. Sidmouth, the curate of Ormathwaite, was with him, and was presented to Betty. He had pleasant manners, and was tall, and fair, and athletic-looking. Betty sat down and let him talk to her. The hot cakes arrived, but she did not eat many. Rosamund heard her describing French and German ancient brasses. She was peculiarly interested in ancient brasses, she said. Before she had finished tea she had arranged to meet Mr. Sidmouth at the church gates next day and look at those in Ormathwaite Church. Presently she said she felt chilly, and would like to walk about the garden. A little later, when Mrs. Eastwood arrived with Joan, they found no one to receive them. The tea-tables were there, and Frank's setter had just finished a plate of sandwiches, but the chairs were empty. The butler looked round, and said something about the kitchen-garden.

"All right," said Mrs. Eastwood, who felt quite at

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home in her brother's house. "We'll help ourselves, Marsh."

She poured out tea for Joan, and they sat together for a time. Then they said they would look for the others.

"What is the German aunt like?" said Mrs. Eastwood. "Spectacles and plaits?"

"Oh dear no!" said Joan. "She seems to me more French than German. Indeed, she is not German. She comes from Vienna. I suppose Austrians are different. She is pretty and elegant, and she has a way with her."

"Poor Frank!" said Mrs. Eastwood.

They walked through the grounds till they came to the wild-garden, where there were shady corners and seats, and in one of these they found Betty and Mr. Sidmouth. Betty had to be presented to Mrs. Eastwood, and the two women looked at each other with instant mutual antagonism. It was impossible to say that Betty was unsuitably dressed. Nothing could have been plainer than her champagne-coloured linen, nothing neater than her little burnt straw hat trimmed with wheat-ears and small poppies. But the hang of her skirt, the cut of her coat, the coquetry of her neck-gear, her gloves, her boots, her sunshade—who shall depict them? Mrs. Eastwood had come on her bicycle in an old grey skirt, brown shoes, and a tumbled white blouse. She was too massive to wear white at all. A loosely-fitting white looked grotesque on her. She wore a battered Panama hat that she had cleaned herself, and which was now shapeless enough for a nigger minstrel on Margate sands.

"Is this your first visit to England?" said Mrs. Eastwood.

"Not if you reckon a London hotel England," said

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Betty. "I have never been in a country place before."

"I hope you'll have fine weather," said Mrs. Eastwood; and after the exchange of a few further remarks equally original and interesting, she turned away with Joan and walked towards the kitchen-garden. There they found Frank on his knees in a strawberry-bed trying to find ripe strawberries for Rosamund. When he saw his sister he was full of apologies.

"I quite forgot you were coming," he said.

XXVII

AT the end of ten days Rosamund thought that she was not holding her own as well as she should have done. Betty still treated her like a child, and Joan was so guileless that she played into Betty's hands. Mr. Sidmouth and Frank Ilchester were for ever about the house now, and they did not come by Rosamund's invitation. She got rather tired of seeing them, but she did not like to say so. Joan had always asked whom she pleased to Ormathwaite, and in some ways was still more mistress there than Rosamund. She still superintended the garden, the coachman came to her for orders, the village folk for help. Until Betty came the system had worked smoothly. Rosamund had never felt jealous of her sister-in-law, and Joan had readily ceded the indoor housekeeping, which she had never liked and never done well. But somehow Betty's arrival made a difference. She seemed to emphasise the fact that Rosamund was a

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cipher and to be amused, but not surprised to find it so.

Rosamund wished more and more for her husband's return, and she wandered about by herself a good deal, always thinking of him. She spent hours by the stream and in the wood, where they had been together last Sunday; and, like a love-sick girl, she tried to recall every tone of his voice and every change in his face. She found her own company pleasanter than any one else's, and she was glad that Betty had seen fit to strike up an ardent friendship with Joan.

Poor Joan was in a distracted state just now, and grateful for Betty's vivid interest and sympathy. Her grand charity concert was advertised in all the local papers for a week hence, and meanwhile everything to do with it was going wrong. Her pianist had sprained her wrist, her soprano was down with laryngitis, and the village glee-singers squabbled more than they practised. Her star insisted on singing the *Erl-King*, and Joan did not know who could play the accompaniment. It was quite beyond her own powers. Then a main feature of the entertainment was to have been a duet on two pianos. That, it seemed, must fall through altogether.

"I really don't know what to do," said Joan. "Is it any use to order the second piano? I was going to have them both brought on Monday, so that there could be some rehearsals."

The post had just come in, bringing a letter from Christian Witt to Betty, and a disastrous account of the pianist's sprained wrist to Joan. They sat at the open windows of Joan's room together, and Betty felt rather bored. She had been ten days now in an English country house, and mighty dull she thought it. Frank Ilchester came in and out a great deal, but

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he only had eyes for Rosamund—quite scandalous eyes, Betty said to herself, for Rosamund. Mr. Sidmouth came too, but after the first few days Betty took a dislike to his voice. It got on her nerves, and she nearly said "Amen" to him when he offered her bread-and-butter. Apparently, there were no other single men in the neighbourhood, and Major Eastwood, the only married man she had seen, had a red neck and talked about shorthorns.

"But if you were going to have a duet on two pianos your accompaniments are safe," she said. "You must have a second pianist."

Joan shook her head.

"It is Mr. Sidmouth," she said. "He could not play the *Erl-King*."

"Allmächtiger!" cried Betty. "I've heard him play. His fingers knock the keys like drumsticks."

"He has spent the whole winter and spring learning his part of that duet . . . but he is no use for anything else. What am I to do? All the tickets are sold. People are coming from far and wide . . ."

"To hear Mr. Sidmouth play the piano? How amiable! What are you going to sing?"

"Rubbish," said Joan sadly. "We daren't have much good music. People don't like it. Mr. Sidmouth was so set on this duet I hadn't the heart to deny him. But I have put a patter song in front and a comic recitation behind to make it go down. People get so fidgety over anything classical."

"I should get fidgety myself if I had to hear Mr. Sidmouth flounder through a Mozart sonata," said Betty. "Let him read something instead. I'm sure he loves the sound of his own voice."

"But he has taken such pains with this duet. You know he has a theory that music is solely a

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question of taking pains. He says he was born unmusical."

"I should have guessed it," said Betty dryly. Then she opened Christian's letter and read it through again. "Do you remember Christian Witt?" she said to Joan.

"Very well indeed," said the girl.

"He says something about you in this letter."

"Does he remember me, then?"

"He asks after the lady with the angel's voice. He would like to hear you sing the *Sapphic Ode* again."

"Where is he now?"

"In London. He is conducting there to-morrow night."

Joan looked at Betty and Betty looked at Joan. The same thought was in both minds, but Joan did not like to utter it. The grand charity concert, Mr. Sidmouth's duet, the village glee-singers, all the trumpery programme, suddenly seemed to wither. The name and memory of Christian Witt had blasted it.

"He never would, he never could . . ." murmured Joan.

"I believe he would . . . if I asked him," said Betty. "He has come further than this for me. As for the concert, it might amuse him to take it in hand. There is only one thing . . ."

Joan looked up, ready for any sacrifice.

"I cannot see Christian playing a duet with Mr. Sidmouth," said Betty. "You don't want the poor young man murdered."

"If he comes and will help us he shall be commander-in-chief," said Joan.

"He would be that at once willy-nilly," said Betty. "It is his *métier*."

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"But it is impossible to believe that he will come."

"Let us go down to the village and send a reply-paid telegram at once. I suppose you can put him up here?"

"Of course."

Betty sat down and composed her telegram. She told Christian what was wanted of him and how to come, and she said she would meet him at Whincliffe on Monday.

"We won't say a word to Rosamund," she suggested. "Let us surprise her. Can you have the room got ready without her knowledge?"

"Easily."

"I will drive to Whincliffe after lunch on Monday to see the castle, and I will come back with Christian Witt. She will be delighted."

"But what will you say if she proposes to go with you?"

"There is no fear of that. Mr. Ilchester has to be away from home from Saturday till Monday morning. He will have made some plan that brings him to see Rosamund on Monday afternoon."

Joan felt rather startled, and showed it in her glance, but she said nothing. Frank certainly had been ingenious lately in finding excuses for coming to the house, and she thought the very dogs might see that it was Rosamund who attracted him. He was giving a dinner-party at Wangrave on the night after the concert, and though he had an efficient housekeeper and a sister close by, he consulted the young mistress of Ormathwaite morning, noon, and night about his arrangements. It was in vain that she told him she knew nothing about giving dinners in England. Once he rode over to show her various menu-cards; another time she must needs go to tea

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at Wangrave to decide whether his flowers should be in glasses or in silver bowls and vases. He would be obliged to her (one morning) for the recipe of a German sauce; by the afternoon his cook had tried it, and it had gone wrong. Perhaps, if Rosamund came to dinner and saw it, she could explain why.

"I never saw such an idle young man," said Betty, still harping on Frank as she walked into the village. "He seems to have nothing to do but to fuss over menu-cards and sauces. Why doesn't he get married and leave such things to his wife?"

"I have never known Frank trouble about such things before," said Joan.

"You mean he just makes any excuse to hang round Rosamund," said Betty, who in ten days had picked up the English idiom with characteristic quickness.

Joan felt distressed. She had not meant to say anything that could be so interpreted.

"We none of us take him seriously here," she murmured.

Betty gave a little shrug, and walked into the post-office. As she came out of it with Joan they met Frank Ilchester.

"Can I do anything in Whincliffe for you this afternoon?" he said. "I am going to take my bike there to be repaired."

Joan thanked him, but said they were sending in themselves. Rosamund was shopping in Danby, and the carriage would have to fetch her from the station.

"Did you have a very dull drive back?" said Betty to her niece at dinner-time.

"How could it be dull such a lovely evening?" said Rosamund. "But I was not alone. Frank

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Ilchester came to the station and asked me to give him a lift. He had ridden in on his bicycle, and left it for repairs."

Betty's silence was expressive. At any rate, Joan understood it, and was troubled. She began to wish her brother back.

"How is Will getting on in London?" she said to Rosamund. "What do you hear from him?"

"He is very well. Aunt Betty, have you seen Joan's tame rabbit? He runs about the table and nibbles the dessert if we let him. Do have him in, Joan. I am sure it would amuse Aunt Betty to see him."

"Provided you don't ask me to eat nibbled dessert," said Betty, whose curiosity about her niece's marriage was not put to rest by Rosamund's evasion.

Dacre had only written once to Rosamund since he left, and however often Rosamund read his letter, she could not make much of its business-like lines. He gave her his address; he told her he had bought a new lawn-mower; he asked her to send him a pamphlet, and explained where she would find it; he hoped Joan's concert would be a success, and he sent his love to Joan. That was all. Rosamund read it and re-read it, and finally thought the address more intimate and consoling than the letter. "Mrs. Dacre . . . Ormathwaite. . . ." She had got used to her name on the lips of strangers, but to hear her husband use it, to see it in his writing, still gave her a thrill. When she looked for the pamphlet she lingered in his room, sat down in the chair opposite his, and tried to fancy him there. She had so vivid a fancy that this exercise of it grew into a pleasure, and she often spent some time in the lonely room, happier with the phantom of her husband than with

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the real people who diverted her thoughts from him. She took care that no one else should see her come in here, and when she had shown Betty the whole house she had just opened this door and closed it again.

"Whenever Mr. Ilchester is not here Rosamund moons about by herself," said Betty on Monday morning. "She is hardly ever with us. I might be your guest, not hers."

Joan was giving half her attention to Betty and half to a puppy who was to be kept out of the room and had made up his mind to come in. Whenever he wriggled over the threshold of the low window his mistress gently shoved him back into the garden, and this happened about twice a minute. He was an absurd little creature with a white head and a black body, and Betty thought him both hideous and a nuisance.

"No doubt she misses her husband," she continued pensively. "I suppose when he is at home they are always together. Why didn't she go with him?"

Joan knelt down on the floor, lifted up the pup, kissed him, cuffed him, and put him back in the garden.

"Isn't he a beautiful darling?" she cried. She got back into her chair and looked at Betty with her friendly smile. She thought Betty admirable and bewitching, but she wished she would not talk about Rosamund and Will. Joan was not happy about them herself, and she did not like to see Frank Ilchester so much in her sister-in-law's company, because she knew the countryside had eyes too, and would gossip. That drive back last Friday, for instance, must have excited comment, in Whincliffe

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and out of it. She felt indignant with Frank for his want of consideration.

"I can hardly believe that Herr Witt is really coming to-night," she said. "To think that I should hear that splendid playing again! I wonder what Rosamund will say when she sees him?"

Betty wondered too. She had often spoken of Christian to her niece, and had found her ready to respond. Rosamund neither avoided the musician's name nor sought it. It was the same when Betty talked of Frank Ilchester. But the moment she mentioned Dacre it was not the same. Rosamund shut herself up or changed the subject with unskilful abruptness. This morning she had looked radiant when the post brought her a letter from her husband.

"He will be home this week," she said to Joan.

"Which day?"

"He isn't sure yet; as soon as he can. He has got through more quickly than he expected."

Joan looked delighted. Betty pricked up her ears.

"Will your brother object to finding Christian Witt in his house?" she asked when they were by themselves.

"Surely not," said Joan, looking surprised. "Why should he object?"

Directly the letter came Rosamund tried to prepare for her husband's return. Unfortunately, there was nothing whatever for her to do. She could fill the rooms and the hall with fresh flowers, but she would have done that in any case next day, when some of Joan's helpers were coming to dinner. Towards evening she went into his study and sat down there. She had been playing croquet with Frank Ilchester ever since lunch, and had only just got rid of him.

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Joan was still in the garden. Betty had driven in to Whincliffe. She had arranged to do this without consulting Rosamund or asking for her company, and it was the second time she had done so. As Rosamund watched her start, she felt again that she was not holding her own very well. She looked round the study, and wondered whether Dacre would mind if she brought some flowers here. The walls were lined with books, many of them from her father's library. Her thoughts went back to her father and to the days when Dacre had worked with him in Fichtenstadt. How little she had known of the Englishman then and of his home surroundings! How little, in a sense, she knew of him now. She did not know whether he would be pleased if she put flowers on his table, and yet she had been married to him nearly a year. She wished she knew which night he was coming so that she could put on the gown that suited her best.

The sounds of arrival and of voices in the hall arrested her thoughts. She sprang to her feet, then waited, puzzled and disturbed. That was a man's voice, unmistakably a man's voice, one known to her, but not one she had heard of late. A jolly laugh mingled with the doubtful welcome of Joan's dogs as Rosamund opened the door, hardly trusting her ears, hardly believing her eyes. At first she did not smile; till Christian Witt had both her hands in his she did not speak.

"Well," he cried, "aren't you glad to see me . . . child? But you are a child no longer. Du machst wohl Jung und Alt begehrllich, wenn du so schön erscheinst."

"I didn't know you were coming. They didn't tell me," stammered Rosamund.

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"We knew it would be a pleasant surprise," said Betty.

But Joan felt uneasy. Rosamund's evident consternation troubled her.

XXVIII

DINNER was over, and Rosamund sat by the open window in Joan's sitting-room while Christian played. Joan sat a little way from the piano, where she could best see the player's hands. It gave her as much pleasure to watch him as to listen, and her face was rapt and quiet. Betty was stealthily looking at a pile of London sale catalogues that had come by the evening post. She did not dare to crackle the leaves as she turned them, and she had been rather surprised that Christian had said nothing when he saw them in her hands. But she had discovered at dinner that Christian Witt had neither eyes nor ears for her that night. If Joan's village concert had been the Baireuth Festival he could not have taken a deeper interest in its success or accepted the thorny post of director with greater zeal. By the time dessert was on the table he had reorganised the programme and swept away some of the rubbishy items that formed the greater part of it.

"What is this?" he cried. "*I wandered o'er the sun-kissed hills.* Song from *The Motor Girl*, by Reggie Brown. Nonsense! You are not going to waste yourself on Mr. Reggie Brown. I know exactly what you will sing. After dinner I will tell you, and every day till the concert you will practise with me.

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For the others I cannot speak. There is no time to teach them. But as far as we can we will give people what is good."

"They will say it is 'stiff,' " murmured Joan. "If they are disagreeable they will say it is 'stuffy.' "

"I do not understand English slang, so I shall not grieve," said Christian. "Now, there is this duet by Mozart for two pianos. Who is to play it?"

The three women looked at each other.

"It is Mr. Sidmouth, the curate, who was to have played it with the lady who has sprained her wrist," volunteered Rosamund.

"I suppose he is to play it with me, then?"

"Heaven have mercy on him!" whispered Betty.

Christian heard what she said. There was an awkward silence. Then Joan looked straight at the German and spoke.

"I wish you would play it with him," she said. "He has worked at it all the winter, and if we throw him over he will feel pained and humiliated."

"Is he very bad?" said Christian.

"Very bad," said Joan, with a sigh. "His time is awful, and his touch is worse. He slurs his runs and muddles his bass, and never takes his foot off the loud pedal."

Christian gave a little growl, and then looked at Joan. Her gentle ways, her dark, level brows, her low voice, all enchanted him. She never seemed to be thinking of herself at all, and until he met her he had not believed a pretty woman could be so guileless.

"I will play it with him," he said, nodding at her. "I will make him keep his foot off the pedal, and perhaps I can make him keep time. For the rest, three days is not enough."

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"A lifetime would not be enough in this case," said Betty.

After dinner Christian had got up when the ladies did and followed them into Joan's room. He had had wine enough, he said. Now he wanted music. To-morrow, when strangers were there, he would show them that he knew how to behave.

"You have a beautiful home," he had said suddenly to Rosamund as they crossed the hall. "Are you happy in England, child? When is your husband coming back? I should like to see him again."

"He may be back any day," said Rosamund.

There was an involuntary quiver of hope and pleasure in her voice that Christian's quick ears noted. He looked at her and smiled. Then he sat down to the piano and played a little, and then Joan sang. She began by singing the *Sapphische Ode* :

"Rosen brach ich Nachts mir am dunklen Hage:
Süsser hauchten Duft sie, als je am Tage,
Doch verstreuten reich die bewegten Aeste
Thau der mich nässte."

After that Joan had sung other things, and then Christian had begun to play again. But it was the slow, passionate setting of the ode that made music in Rosamund's soul. And outside in the midsummer garden the flowers, the birds, and the still, warm air were calling her. The heavy scent of lilies came in at the window, and with it the fresh scent of mignonette. The hedges in the road were covered, she knew, with the deep-red wild-roses of Northern England; the little moon had just floated into the heavens behind Wangrave Crag. Rosamund slipped unseen into the garden and stood there. It was full of flowers: carnations and roses and larkspurs, honeysweet peas,

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tall yellow evening primroses, snap-dragons and Canterbury bells. But it was the wild-roses Rosamund thought she would gather and set on her husband's table. She walked slowly down the drive, looking for stars in the sky. The birds were hushed; the breeze had fallen; far away in the Wangrave woods she heard an owl calling. As she got further from the house she lost the sound of the piano, and when she reached the gates she found that the road was deserted. Rosamund did not venture out there till she had made sure of this.

Then she saw a great cluster of wild honeysuckle in the hedge, and gathered a few sprays of it, that she fastened in her waist-band. Then she began to gather her roses. But her gown was a long one, and she was too dainty a creature to let it touch the road. She had to hold it over one arm, and that hindered her. The briars had thorns, and unless she was careful they scratched her. She had only got a few roses, when the sound of wheels coming from Whincliffe startled her. It might be strangers, and they would pass her by; it might be some one who knew her, and they would stare; it might be her husband, and what would he say if he found her wandering on the high-road at this time of night? She stood close to the hedge, and did not stir; but she knew that in the moonlight her white gown would betray her to any one who chanced to look her way. As the cab came near she saw that it was an open one, and that a man sat inside. She took a step forward as she saw that the man was Dacre. At the same moment he saw her, uttered an exclamation of surprise, and stopped the cab just beyond her. She heard him send the driver on, and then she saw him coming down the road to meet her.

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"Rosamund," he said, "why are you out here?"

She had gone towards him, and the moonlight, as well as her delight at seeing him, made her bold.

"My hands are full," she said.

The invitation was direct and innocent. So was her uplifted face and the little thrill of appeal in her voice. She was wooing him, and Dacre could not resist her.

"Rosamund," he said again, and there, in the empty road, in the deep shadow of the hedge, he kissed her. A low cry of joy escaped his wife as she clung to him.

"I have missed you so," she said. "Next time you go away take me with you."

They walked slowly along the road and turned in at their own gates. The returning cab passed them by.

"How have you got on?" said Dacre when they were beyond the clatter of its wheels again. "And what are you doing alone out here at this time of night?"

"I was gathering roses for your room," said Rosamund. "'Rosen brach ich Nachts mir am dunklen Hage.' Joan sang the *Sapphische Ode* . . . and it made me want to come and gather roses . . . at night . . . for you. . . . And they are very very sweet . . . and they are wet with dew. . . . Will you have them?"

"You heard Joan sing, and you came out into the night to gather roses . . . for me," repeated Dacre. "But the *Sapphic Ode* is a love-poem, Rosamund. I don't think you understand. You have always had pretty ways . . . and I suppose because I was coming back you thought some flowers . . . don't cry, child . . . why are your eyes full of tears? What have I said? . . . What . . . what the devil

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... who is at Ormathwaite? Who is playing like that?"

Through a changing scale of surprise and doubt and tenderness, Dacre's voice had reached angry amazement. From the open windows of Joan's room came the clash of the *Walkürenritt*. Dacre took his arm from Rosamund's shoulder and stood still.

"Who is at Ormathwaite?" he said again.

"Christian Witt," said Rosamund.

All the light died out of her face as she watched the tenderness die out of his, and he saw that she wanted to say more, but at first was too much moved to speak.

"When did he come?" he asked.

"To-night, before dinner. Aunt Betty and Joan invited him by telegram without consulting me."

"They had no business to do so."

"Joan meant no harm. Aunt Betty told her I should think it a pleasant surprise; but I didn't, because I was afraid that you . . ."

"Couldn't you have stopped it?"

"Until I heard his voice in the hall I had no idea that he was coming. It was impossible to turn him away."

"Oh, of course," said Dacre; "we must make the best of it."

The roses drooped in Rosamund's hands, and she hung behind her husband when they had entered the house. He went first to his study, and as he turned to shut the door he saw her on the threshold.

"I shall want something to eat," he said in a matter-of-fact way. "I think I'll have it before I see the others."

He rang and gave his order, while Rosamund stood on the hearthrug, uncertain of her welcome, unwilling

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to go. She had asked for water for her roses, and when it was brought she arranged them in a little jar and set them on the writing-table. The *Walkürenritt* had come to an end. There was no sound of music now in the quiet house. Dacre was sitting in the chair to which, in his absence, Rosamund had called his ghost. She sat down opposite, and looked at him wistfully. The ghost had been easier to approach and conciliate.

"What have you been doing in London?" she asked.

"I've been seeing publishers and choosing plates," he said. "The first volume of your father's book will be out in the autumn."

"It is your book, too, isn't it?"

"The second volume will be. This is almost entirely your father's work . . . as he left it."

"I wish he was alive to see it," she said.

"I wish for your sake, too, that he had lived," said Dacre. He got up as he spoke, and turned over a heap of bills and circulars waiting for him on his writing-table. Then he went upstairs.

Rosamund did not go back to Joan's room. She heard the sound of an arrival, and then Frank Ilchester's voice in the hall, and soon after that the piano again. She went into the dining-room and dismissed the servants waiting there. When Dacre appeared he found the cold meal he had ordered, and Rosamund to pour out wine for him.

"When is Joan's concert?" he asked.

"On Friday."

"And to-day is Monday. How is it Herr Witt can spare the time?"

"I don't know," said Rosamund; "I have hardly spoken to him since he came."

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"Don't you think you ought to go back to the others now?"

"Perhaps I ought," said Rosamund dejectedly. She got up and went slowly towards the door. Dacre watched her, almost spoke to recall her, checked himself, and let her go. The droop of her figure and her gentle acquiescence touched him, but the thought of Christian Witt in his house angered him. He believed in his wife's loyalty, but he believed it cost her a struggle to be loyal. As for the roses, it is the German way to meet the returning traveller with a gift of flowers. Roses of duty and politeness he reckoned them, not the roses of the ode.

Rosamund did not join the others when she left the dining-room at her husband's bidding. She felt unequal to any encounter with them yet, and she pushed open the door of the unlighted drawing-room, and found her way to a window-seat. There she sat and cried her heart out like a child. She did not know what to do, yet she knew that in theory her course was plain. She ought to tell her husband that she loved him, not Christian or another. But just this was what she had brazenly tried to do, she vowed, as she looked back; and if a man will not see, it must be because he has no mind to; and if he has no mind, there is the end of the story for such as Rosamund. She felt to-night that she had reached the utmost limit of the advances she could make. The forces that defeated her were intangible, but none the less insuperable.

She started to her feet as some one opened the door and came stumbling across the room; but she felt a sharp pang of disappointment when she saw Frank Ilchester.

"I say, Mrs. Dacre, I've been hunting for you every-

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where, upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber. The German Johnnie wants you to sing in a quartette on Friday. Won't it be rippin'? By Jove! how light it is in this window! Do you know that Dacre is back? He's in there talking German as fast as if it was English. I say . . . Mrs. Dacre . . . is anything the matter?"

The boy had stumbled across the room in the moonlight, talking as he came, and had now come face to face with Rosamund. It was no use for either of them to pretend. Her eyes were still filled with tears, her face was marked by them, her breath was sobbing and unsteady.

"I'll come in a minute," she said.

Frank looked after her as she fled from the room, and his anger was consuming. Who could be brute enough to make his divinity cry and not follow to console her? She had not shown surprise when he told her of Dacre's arrival. Perhaps she had seen him. Dacre had not asked for her or spoken her name just now. It was Christian who had demanded her presence when the quartette was spoken of; it was Betty who had asked Frank to look for her niece. He went back to Joan's room, and said that Mrs. Dacre would be with them directly.

When Rosamund appeared she had washed away her tears and regained her composure. Joan and Christian were too much absorbed in their music to notice that she had been crying, but the others saw it. Frank observed that she neither spoke to her husband nor glanced at him when she came into the room, so he knew they must have met already, and he concluded that in one way or the other Dacre was responsible for his wife's tears. He wished they belonged to a primitive state of society that would permit him to

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kill Dacre and take Rosamund for his own. As he sang in the quartette he put all the fury of his mood into his crude bass voice, and enjoyed doing so. But Christian Witt stopped suddenly and told him not to bellow. Rosamund sang badly too. She was inattentive and out of practice.

"You have forgotten all I taught you," said Christian. "Your aunt sings better than you do now."

"You take my part, then, Aunt Betty," said Rosamund. "It is quite true: I have neglected my music."

"Why do you allow it?" said Christian, turning suddenly to Dacre. "Your wife has a pretty voice, and I had begun to train it carefully."

"My wife's voice is her own," said Dacre, looking amused. "She does as she pleases."

"Ugh!" said Christian Witt. "That is the English idea. If my wife has a voice, it will not be her own: it will be mine, and I shall show her how to make the best of it."

"You will never have a wife," said Betty. "You are too fickle and too much wrapt up in yourself and your music."

Christian's eyes sought Joan's, and his fingers rippled over the keys of the piano.

"Come and sing again," he said to her. "You have not neglected your music like that faithless child. We will try the quartette once more. Frau Elsler will sing the soprano, and Herr Frank will try to remember that he is not a cow who is mourning her calf."

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XXIX

CHRISTIAN and Joan were thoroughly enjoying themselves. They met at the piano before breakfast, and they spent the morning together at the piano. In the afternoon they went down to the village hall, where they had two pianos, Christian's violin, Mr. Sidmouth, and any other performers who could be whipped up to attend rehearsals. When the four helpers from Whincliffe came to dinner on Tuesday, Christian tested their capacities, and said he would not have two of them at any price. He managed to convey this judgment to their understanding without incurring their resentment. Every one liked him, every one smiled at him, and laughed with him. Frank Ilchester took a snapshot of him walking arm in arm with Mr. Sidmouth down the village street, the German with his panama on the back of his head and his white sun-umbrella unfurled. Mrs. Eastwood found him at Joan's piano one hot afternoon with a cigar in his mouth, and his coat on a chair beside him. He got into his coat when the ladies appeared, but he did not let his cigar out. At first they talked. Mrs. Eastwood asked Christian what outdoor games he played, and he told her he never played any. Then she asked him if there was "huntin'" in his part of the world, and he said he didn't know. Then she said she had heard that venison was plentiful, and could he tell her how the deer were preserved, and who had permission to stalk

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them? But he said he had never seen any part of a deer except its back, and he liked it basted with sour cream. After that he sat down to the piano, and when he had played to Mrs. Eastwood, she thanked him in the stammering slang that was the only eloquence at her command. She also asked him to dinner with every one else from Ormathwaite on Thursday, and mentioned that they would meet again at the concert on Friday, and at Wangrave on Saturday.

"Hope it won't give you the hump," she said, "seein' the same little lot night after night."

Christian bowed in a dignified way, accepted her invitation, and explained that he would not be at Wangrave, as he was obliged to leave the day after the concert. He understood English pretty well, but he could not always understand Mrs. Eastwood. She spoke so quickly, and used so many expressions he had not been taught at school.

"Can you always understand her?" he said to Rosamund when she had gone.

"Yes, I can now. She was apologising for the want of variety in a country neighbourhood. We certainly meet each other very often. But I am sorry you are obliged to leave before the dinner at Wangrave."

"Why? Is there to be anything unusual about the dinner at that young man's house?"

"Oh, I take a special interest in it," said Rosamund. "I have chosen the menu-cards and the decorations, you know."

"Hm . . .!" said Christian. "Why doesn't Mr. Frank get married?"

"I wish he would," said Rosamund. "I wish . . ."

She stopped; and then she saw that Christian

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suspected what she wished, and was blazing with disapproval.

"A young moon-calf like that!" he cried. "Of course no sensible girl would marry him. But there are girls enough in the world who are not at all sensible. Is he well off?"

"I believe so," said Rosamund.

Christian Witt looked out of the window, and saw Frank Ilchester crossing the lawn.

"His third visit to-day," he said in a tone of exasperation.

"He only comes to see me," said Rosamund, thinking to relieve his jealousy of Joan.

"We all know that," growled Christian. "The wonder is that your husband allows it."

"You don't understand," said Rosamund, on her dignity. "We are on friendly terms, but . . ."

"It is not my business, of course," said Christian, and he marched out of the room. He avoided Frank, but met Betty in the drive.

"Are you going down to the village?" she said. "I'll come with you."

"I can't do with you," he said grumpily. "I have to practise that infernal duet, and I won't have ladies present. Sidmouth is a delightful fellow, and he is coming to stay with me in Fichtenstadt this summer; but he has promised not to touch the piano."

"I wonder how the duet will go off on Friday?"

"It will be a fine performance. Luckily, no one but Miss Dacre will understand what a fool I make of myself."

"I shall understand."

"You know nothing whatever of instrumental music: you only pretend. But you do know some-

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thing of men. Can't you turn the head of the young gentleman who bellows?"

"I don't think so," said Betty demurely. "He belongs to Rosamund."

Christian was really out of humour. He looked at Betty as if he would like to slay her, and strode away without speaking. In the road that led to the village he met his host, with whom he had hitherto held little communication. Dacre stopped to speak.

"The room is going to be crowded on Friday," he said. "Every place is sold. Half Whincliffe is coming to hear you play."

"Are you coming yourself, Mr. Dacre?"

"Certainly. I look forward to it."

Christian Witt made some colourless rejoinder, and then for a moment the two men stood in the road considering each other.

"I am coming to Fichtenstadt for a week or two soon," said Dacre. "Shall you be there at the end of the month?"

"I may be. Will Mrs. Dacre and your sister come with you?"

"I believe not," said Dacre rather frigidly.

The two men parted after that, and Christian went on to the village.

"It is a great privilege to play with such a fine musician," Mr. Sidmouth said to Joan next day. "But I am really rather glad his English fails him so often. As I don't understand German, I don't know what I am listening to, but it sounds awful."

"Let us go into the woods this afternoon and forget the concert for an hour," Christian said to Joan on Friday; and as he knew his way about by this time, he managed to escape Betty after lunch and

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meet Joan by the stone stile at the end of the garden.

"Your brother is coming to Fichtenstadt at the end of July," he said when they had found their way to the beck and were watching the spray that dashed over some big boulders above them. "Won't you come with him?"

"I should like to," said Joan. "But this is the first I have heard of it. Is Rosamund going?"

"I believe not."

"She is longing to see Fichtenstadt again. I will ask Will to let us both go with him."

"Do," said Christian. "The opera will be shut and the concerts over . . . but there is always music. If there was no one in the world but you and me there would be music. I would play and you would sing . . . as we have done here this week. Even the duet for two pianos will not spoil the memories of this week. Thank you for letting me come."

"Oh," cried Joan, "it is I who should thank you for all your kindness and patience."

"Come to Fichtenstadt," said Christian, setting his voice and his eyes, as he very well knew how, to woo her. "You saw nothing of Germany when you were there before. Come and discover that with us, too, life is pleasant. You have a very fine home here, but you have no music except what you make yourself, and you have heard too little, you know too little, to be sufficient to yourself. I could not live here a year. You and I in a wilderness . . . that is different . . . but a wilderness is not an English country neighbourhood where Mr. Sidmouth murders Mozart unreprieved and Mr. Ilchester sings about la-la-girls and Tommies. It is only five days ago that you were going to sing . . . what was it?"

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"But we have very good music in England," said Joan, "and I dare say you have bad music in Germany."

"Plenty," said Christian; "but most of us know the difference."

Joan was half pleased, half sorry, to hear Betty's voice hailing them from a little way up the stream. A moment later she joined them, and the three strolled back through the copse and the garden together.

"What is Rosamund doing?" said Joan.

"Need you ask?" said Betty. "Sitting in the shade, with Frank Ilchester at her feet."

Christian scowled at the innuendo in Betty's smooth ironical voice, and Joan made up her mind that she would speak to Rosamund when she got a chance. That day, as she expected, the chance did not come. When they approached the house they found tea set out in the garden, and a cluster of people gathered near the tables. Two of them had come to dine and sleep at Ormathwaite. Frank Ilchester was there, and Mr. Sidmouth, and the Vicar, with his elderly sisters. Christian took a chair a little way off and watched Rosamund. The girl had a pretty, tranquil dignity of manner that suited her surroundings. She wore a thin white gown and a shady hat. She had learned how to dress; she had always known naturally how to move. Frank Ilchester was openly making a fool of himself about her, following her with his eyes, waiting on her hand and foot, appealing to her in season and out of season. His infatuation must be plain to every one, thought Christian. Presently Dacre joined the party on the lawn, and asked his wife for a cup of tea. Directly he appeared Rosamund's face changed as a cloud does when it drifts past the moon. She carried him his tea, though both the young men present

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tried to take it from her. He did not see what she was doing till she touched his arm. Then he thanked her, and resumed his conversation with the Vicar. Rosamund, some of the radiance having died out of her face, went back to her place near the tea-tray.

Dinner was to be served in the hall to-day an hour earlier than usual, and there was to be a supper-party for forty people after the concert. Rosamund had taken great pains with this part of the entertainment, and when tea was over she slipped away to the dining-room to look at her table. Since she had been housekeeper there was no torn linen at Ormathwaite, and to-night every one of the fine damask napkins had her monogram embroidered in the corner. It pleased her to see them standing up like soldiers on the forty plates. There was a great deal of old silver at Ormathwaite that she had brought into use, and a long silver stand for the centre of the table, on which she had lightly arranged hundreds of roses. There was no food on the table, nothing but flowers, and glass, and silver, and little dishes, with sweets and salted almonds. As she bent over the table, Frank Ilchester looked in.

"I say," he exclaimed ingeniously, "my table won't look like that to-morrow . . . unless you come over after lunch and help me. Do you think you could?"

"Perhaps I could," said Rosamund. "But your housekeeper . . ."

"My housekeeper adores you . . . as every one else does," said Frank.

"I won't promise," said Rosamund, who was paying more attention to her roses than to her companion. "I may be wanted at home."

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"You are never wanted here as badly as you are at Wangrave. I'm going to take that rose."

"Why?"

"Because you have touched it."

"What stuff you talk the last few days!" said Rosamund absently. "You have plenty of roses at home."

"I haven't one; not so much as a bud. If I look at a rose my gardener starts up from behind a bush, and says: 'They're wanted for Saturday, sir.' You don't know how I'm put upon."

"I know too much about flowers now to believe it," said Rosamund, laughing. "The roses you gather to-morrow are only half open to-day."

Frank was trying to disentangle the one he coveted from the others in the glass, and when he had succeeded he kissed it.

"My lady's gage!" he cried. And he went out of the room, shouting the first few lines of *My love's like a red, red rose*. He had often heard Joan sing it, but he never could get a bar right. He looked so little where he was going that he nearly fell over Christian Witt in the doorway.

"I want my cigar-case," said Christian in his most bearish voice to Rosamund; "I left it here at lunch-time."

When Christian Witt was out of humour there was no mistake about it. Rosamund looked at him affectionately.

"Anything wrong?" she asked.

"Yes," said Christian. "Why do you give roses to a handsome young man and let him bellow a love-song about them . . . with half the notes wrong and the other half out of tune?"

Rosamund could not make up her mind whether to

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laugh or be angry. She was still extremely fond of Christian Witt, though she wondered now how she could ever have woven a romance about a man who wore a beard and would be decidedly stout some day.

"How can I help what he sings?" she said. "And he took the rose."

Christian looked half mollified, half incredulous.

"Suppose you give me one," he said.

Rosamund gladly chose a lemon-coloured bud for him, put a spray of maiden-hair with it, and helped him to fasten it in his buttonhole. She had not quite finished when Dacre entered the room.

"I expected to find Graves here," he said, and would have gone away again. But Rosamund ran after him.

"I want to ask you about something," she said.

Christian Witt, with her rose in his buttonhole, passed out into the hall.

"Well?" said Dacre, coming back into the room.

"Don't you think our table looks nice?"

"Very nice. Who arranged the flowers?"

"I did."

There was a moment's silence before Dacre spoke again.

"I thought you wanted to ask me something," he said. "I've told Graves about the wine."

"Will you wear a rose if I give you one?"

"I met Frank coming away from here with a red rose, and I'm afraid I disturbed you when you were presenting a yellow one to Herr Witt. What colour have you left for me?"

"Oh, none at all if you speak in that tone."

"As you please; but in future I would rather you let other men gather their own roses."

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"Why should you care, since we are nothing to each other?"

"We are husband and wife," said Dacre. "I wonder how long it will take you to learn what that implies?"

"Perhaps we both have something to learn," said Rosamund slowly.

XXX

THE little village hall was crowded. There were gentlefolk from miles round on the front benches, and villagers on the back ones, and townspeople from Whincliffe in between. Joan was known and liked throughout the county, and a concert she got up was always well attended. But this time the fame of Christian Witt had gone abroad, and every ticket could have been sold three times.

"I suppose they would have rushed here just the same if you were going to balance billiard balls on your toes," Betty said to him as they surveyed the audience together. "It can't be your playing that attracts them. We have been here long enough to know the kind of music they really like."

Betty was not happy. She wished she had never invited Christian to Ormathwaite, and ever since he came she wished she could pack him off again. She could endure the thought that he did not mean to marry her. It had a gleam of hope in it. As time went on he might, from sheer habit, find her indispensable, and change his mind. But this could not

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happen if he married any one else, and the fear that he would do so haunted her.

“ ‘ An artist married is an artist marred, ’ ” she had said to him, and he corrected her quotation.

“ ‘ A young man married is a man that's marred ’ —I am thirty-three.”

It was a declaration of independence, and Betty felt restless. Life stretched grey and dusty before her if Christian brought a wife to Fichtenstadt. Of course, she could marry some one else. A charming widow with a good income has chances enough. There was that old Major Gadow, for instance. Betty gave a little shudder as she thought of his pompous manners and his rasping, disagreeable voice. Then Christian Witt appeared on the platform with Mr. Sidmouth, and the two men sat down to their duet for two pianos. Betty sat beside Dacre in the front row. There was an empty place beside him reserved for Rosamund, but at present she was with every one else from Ormathwaite in a little waiting-room behind the platform.

“ Why does Rosamund stay in there? ” said Betty to Dacre; “ she is not one of the performers.”

Dacre looked across the platform towards the open doorway of the waiting-room.

“ I can't see her, ” he said; “ I can see Ilchester.”

“ Then you may be sure Rosamund is close by, ” said Betty.

She expected some remonstrance or some inquiry from Dacre, but she could not even feel sure that he had heard what she said. He was apparently absorbed in his programme, and it struck Betty that his profile could be forbidding.

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"He is either deaf or furious," she said to herself. "I suppose I shall find out the next time he speaks to me."

The duet for two pianos took a long time, and when it came to an end the audience applauded with relief. Then it was the turn of the glee-singers. After that there was a recitation with a musical accompaniment, and then some solo songs. Then Christian sat down to the piano by himself and played one of Liszt's Hungarian rhapsodies. The wild music swept through the room and roused people a little.

"He can play a bit," said Mrs. Eastwood.

"I'd turn out again to-morrow to hear him," said her husband.

"They were all asleep," Christian whispered to Joan; "I have waked them up. I am a proud man. Now they will listen to your songs."

When he and Joan appeared together there was applause before they began, and Joan's songs were a great success, although they were by Brahms and Rubinstein, and not by Reggie Brown.

"Christian Witt is quite right," said Betty: "a voice like your sister's ought to be heard on the operatic stage."

"Is that what he tells Joan?" said Dacre.

"Oh, I am not in their confidence," said Betty. "I have hardly spoken to Christian since he arrived. He has no eyes or ears for any one but Joan. But I heard him say yesterday that he would like to hear her sing *Ortrud* with a full orchestra. I suppose you would never allow her to take up music as a profession?"

"I should not like the stage," said Dacre, "but my sister is her own mistress."

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"Is she? If it came to marriage, could she do as she pleased?"

"Certainly. Any person of her age can in this country."

"But you still look on musicians as organ-grinders in this country, don't you?"

Dacre was saved from answering, because Joan came on again just then to take an encore. He felt as if he was spending the evening in a wasps' nest, and he watched his sister for some sign of what he newly feared. He wondered what Rosamund was doing in the waiting-room, and why she did not sit in her place beside him. When the first part of the programme came to an end he got up.

"I think I'll see what Rosamund is doing," he said to Betty.

"It is time you looked after her," said she; "but I can see her from here. She is doing nothing at all, and Frank Ilchester is helping her."

Dacre made his way to the waiting-room, and it did not improve his temper to find that Betty was right. Rosamund sat on one end of a long bench, and Frank sat close to her. When Dacre appeared the young man was silly enough to look annoyed.

"I think you had better come into the other room," Dacre said to his wife; "there are people who want to see you."

"I like being here," said Rosamund; "it is more amusing."

The room was full, and nearly every one in it was surrounding Christian Witt. Joan stood close to him, and when necessary acted as interpreter.

"I suppose Joan must stay," said Dacre, "but surely you are not wanted."

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"We could not get on for a moment without Mrs. Dacre," said Frank.

"I'm afraid you must try," said Dacre. "Come, Rosamund."

There was no gainsaying his curt tone of command, and Rosamund listened to the second part of the programme from her seat in the front row. When the concert was over the whole audience seemed to crowd round the husband and wife with greetings and congratulations. They got separated, and hardly saw each other again until they met in the supper-room at Ormathwaite. Then the whole length of the table was between them; but Dacre saw that Frank had managed to get close to Rosamund, that he was drinking champagne freely, and that his manner was attracting general attention. Dacre wished he could take the lad by the shoulders and put him out of the room. He saw a contemptuous smile on Betty's face; Joan threw him troubled glances, and Christian Witt looked furious. He saw Frank take a faded red rose from his buttonhole, press it to his lips, and put it carefully away in a pocket-book. Mrs. Eastwood, who sat next to Dacre, watched this little performance, and as the company streamed out of the supper-room she touched her husband's arm.

"What an ass Frank is!" she said. "Can't you tell him to pull up and behave himself?"

"Ain't that more in your line? What?" said the major.

So when Mrs. Eastwood got into the hall she looked for her young brother; but he was nowhere to be seen.

"What has become of Frank?" she said to Joan in Dacre's hearing.

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"What has become of Rosamund?" said Betty, who stood close by. "Every one is asking for her."

Dacre saw Christian stoop down and whisper something in Joan's ear. She moved away at once towards a door leading into the garden, but her brother intercepted her.

"Where are you going?" he said.

"Into the garden."

"I will go instead of you."

Joan drew back, and Dacre went out into the garden. Carriages were waiting in front of the house, and he knew that he must soon be in the hall again, speeding his guests. He walked here and there, but saw no one, and as the windows of Joan's room stood open, he thought he would get back that way. There was no light in the room, but as he stepped over the threshold, the door into the hall opened and shut again. For a moment the light streamed in, and he saw Rosamund slipping away and Frank sitting down near a low table, his head buried in his arms. Dacre lighted some candles.

"Was my wife here a moment ago?" he said.

The younger man had risen, and was looking moodily at his host.

"Yes," he said.

Dacre went on into the hall. His guests were gathered there now, and Rosamund stood amongst them. For a little while both husband and wife were occupied, but Dacre observed that Frank did not appear again.

"It has been a delightful evening," said Betty.

She put up her hand to smother a yawn as she spoke, and Rosamund, who knew what was expected of a hostess by this time, led her guests upstairs. Betty went with them, but Joan ran back again for

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something she had forgotten. Rosamund saw the two strangers to their rooms, looked in on her aunt for a few minutes, and then came leisurely along a corridor to a central landing from which you could look over the banisters into the hall below. The sound of voices attracted her, and, without premeditation, she looked, and then quickly looked away. Christian and Joan sat together on an oak settle near the fireplace, and their rapt faces told their simple story. Christian was talking in a low voice. Joan answered him. Rosamund drew back lest a word not meant for her should reach her ears. The significance of her discovery excited her. The sudden picture of the lovers stirred her imagination. She walked slowly to a further corner of the landing, and sat down on a cushioned window-seat, and looked out of the open window at a night of stars. She had no mind and no patience for bed just yet. Her thoughts were in a ferment. When a door near by opened, and Dacre appeared, she knew it was for him she waited. Her eyes shone as he came towards her.

"It is late," he said.

"Joan has not come up yet," said Rosamund.

Her husband was going towards the stairs, when she got up and put a detaining hand on his arm.

"Come and sit down," she said.

"But it is late. You ought to be in bed, and so ought Joan."

"Never mind for once. Herr Witt is down there too. He is talking to Joan."

"He leaves to-morrow, doesn't he?"

"Yes; and Aunt Betty leaves on Monday."

"They are not travelling together, then?"

"No. Aunt Betty is going straight to Obermatt again."

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Dacre sat down beside his wife on the window-seat.

"Would you like to go with her?" he said.

"Why should I?" said Rosamund, putting all the surprise and unwillingness she felt into her tone.

"This house will be uncomfortable for months, while the laboratory is being built and the electric light put in."

"But what are you going to do?"

"I am going to Fichtenstadt for about a fortnight, and then to America again. Surely you knew."

"How should I know?" said Rosamund sadly. "You never tell me your plans. What will Joan do then?"

"I shall advise her to leave home too. But Joan is her own mistress."

"You have never proposed this before. We have known about the laboratory for months. The noise and dust will only be at one end of the house. I have expected to stay here through it."

"Unfortunately, I have to be away a good deal this summer," said Dacre, "so I wish you to be away too."

"Why?"

"I am not prepared to give reasons. I am not even prepared with definite plans. You have not answered my question about Obermatt yet."

"I should hate it," said Rosamund. "I was miserable there, and I should be again."

Dacre's silence and the ironical gravity of his glance showed Rosamund her blunder. It was at Obermatt that he had asked her to marry him.

"I should like to go there again some day with you," she said, "but not with Aunt Betty."

"Well," said Dacre, "I will talk to Joan tomorrow. She may have ideas."

"I wish you would let us both come with you to

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Fichtenstadt, and then we could go on to some place in the forest. I know that is what Joan would like, and so should I."

"How do you know what Joan would like?" said Dacre abruptly.

Rosamund did not answer at once, but she smiled a little as the murmur of voices reached them from below.

"You were angry about Christian coming," she said. "Surely you have observed that he has no eyes for me?"

"My attention was drawn to it this evening," said Dacre, "by your aunt. I only half believed her."

"I should have thought Aunt Betty would not like it."

"I am not at all sure that I do," said Dacre.

"But you like Christian?"

"Very much. Who could help it? But I think we will keep away from Fichtenstadt this summer. I am not going to encourage any one who would want to take Joan out of her own country."

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XXXI

THE guests had gone from Ormathwaite—first the two who had come for one night only, then Christian Witt, then Betty. After the excitement of the last week life seemed a little flat. Joan went about with a happy face, as if the future held a promise she trusted. In a few days a letter came from Christian, addressed jointly to Rosamund and Dacre, thanking them for their hospitality and informing them that he had a call to conduct a short season of summer opera at a well-known fashionable watering-place. He said he was leaving Fichtenstadt at once.

"I should like to go to Germany this summer," said Joan, soon after the letter came.

"So should I," said Rosamund.

"Then why don't we go?"

"The other night I spoke of it to Will, and he seemed against it."

"I wonder why."

"Perhaps if you asked him he would consent," said Rosamund, evading Joan's question.

Joan stroked the cat in her arms. She sat just inside the window of her room, and Rosamund stood just outside with an empty basket on her arm.

"Where are you going?" she said.

"Frank has asked me to meet him. We are going to look for the cloudberry on the moor."

Joan began to stroke her cat again. She wanted to say something about Frank, and found it difficult.

"He ought to get something to do," she said.

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"This idle life is bad for him, and he hangs about this house too much."

"I am tired of it myself," said Rosamund.

"Then why arrange to go walks with him?"

"Oh, he asked me, and I had no excuse ready, and I have never found the cloudberry."

Joan said no more, and Rosamund moved away from the window. She found Frank waiting for her at the stile, and as they walked towards the moor he complained that he had not seen her for three whole days.

"You won't see me for three whole months if I go away for the rest of the summer," she said.

"Is there any talk of it?" said Frank, looking all amort at once.

"While the building is going on, you know. William will be in America, and Joan has half promised some people in Scotland."

"And you?"

"It isn't settled yet. The idea was that I should go to Aunt Betty at Obermatt, but I would rather not do that."

"I don't see why we should be separated," said Frank ingenuously. "I'll go wherever you do."

Rosamund's silence was meant to be discouraging, and for some time they walked uncomfortably side by side. They were on the open moor now, and the plovers were circling high above them, crying mournfully. Frank had forgotten all about the cloudberry, and Rosamund did not know where to look.

"Why doesn't your husband take you with him?" the young man said suddenly.

"It would not be convenient," said Rosamund, with some stiffness.

They walked on a little further beneath a grey

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sky, across the short moorland grass towards the heather that spread like a rosy sea for miles in front of them. The world was not with them here, and its judgment seemed as far away as the smoke and clatter of towns.

"I would give my life and my soul to make you happy," said the young man passionately. "I wish you would let me try."

Rosamund was horrified, and did not like to say so. Ever since the night of the concert, when they had sat lugubriously together in the darkness of Joan's room, she had known without any need of words that Frank's sighs were not addressed to Joan. Of course, he was only a boy, and his love passages were notorious, but it vexed her to be the subject of one of them. She must be to blame, she thought, and she saw clearly now that she ought not to have come out with him to-day.

"I am tired," she said; "I think I'll go back."

They had left the moor and reached the Ormathwaite copse before Frank spoke again.

"I mean what I said with every breath in my body, Mrs. Dacre," he began. "Any child can see that you are not happy, and that it is not your fault."

"I am perfectly happy," said Rosamund.

Frank went on talking. She hardly knew what he said, she was in so great a hurry to get away from him. But it was a declaration in form, a declaration of undying love. He proposed that they should fly the world together, the sooner the better. He proposed to spend the rest of his life at her feet.

"What Joan says is true," cried Rosamund cruelly. "You ought to get some work to do. It would drive such silly, wicked ideas out of your head."

"Wickedness is a mere word, so is folly. I am not

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afraid of words," said Frank. "There is only one thought in my mind, and that is to live and die for you."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" said Rosamund; "how silly and wicked I must be to let this happen!"

"You could not have helped it. The first moment I saw you it happened. You came into my life like lightning. How can any one see you and not love you?"

"They can," sighed Rosamund.

"I know they can," said Frank savagely.

They were an agitated-looking couple by this time. Rosamund was pale and Frank was red and angry, and both of them, for different reasons, had tears near their eyes. Dacre had not expected to meet them so soon, nor had he expected to see such traces of violent emotion on both young faces. His encounter with them was not accidental. He had looked for Rosamund, and failing to find her, had asked Joan if she knew where his wife was.

"She has gone for a walk," said Joan.

"In which direction?"

"To Ormathwaite moor."

"By herself?"

Joan hesitated. Her brother looked at her, and, without waiting for her to reply, started himself in the direction of the moor.

When Rosamund saw her husband her heart seemed to wait till he should speak. But they met close to the stone stile leading to the garden, and it was with hardly any words that he helped her over it.

"Go on," he said; "I'm not coming back to the house just yet."

The two men watched her disappear, and then they faced each other.

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"I've just told your wife I'd give my heart and soul to make her happy," said Frank, his hands clenched, his voice hoarse and fierce with emotion.

"I was afraid you had been annoying her," said Dacre.

"You have yourself to blame. You neglect her. You have no eyes for her beauty and sweetness. Why the devil did you marry her? She is miserable—any one can see it. She tells me you are going to leave her again for months . . . that you want to pack her off to that little minx of an aunt. She hates the thought of it . . . but you'll never consider that. I wish to Heaven she'd come to me!"

"Have you asked her to?"

Both men were in a white heat of anger by this time, but Dacre leaned quietly against the wall and let the younger one run on. Frank's words had come in short, broken periods; his indignation seemed to suffocate him; his veins stood out on his fair, boyish forehead, and his eyes would have withered Dacre if Dacre had been susceptible.

"I have begged her to come to me," Frank went on. "I shall write to her now and propose the Rocky Mountains. We can forget the world there, and she can forget her miserable marriage. I don't want to behave like a scoundrel, but our stupid laws drive one into an appearance of it. If you have a shred of decent feeling left, you'll apply for a divorce."

"Is that what my wife desires?" said Dacre.

This direct question took Frank aback.

"She didn't say so," he admitted sullenly. "We hadn't got as far as that. But there is no doubt that it would be the happiest thing for her. You needn't fear a big scandal. I would sell Wangrave. It could all be managed quietly."

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"There is not going to be either a big or a little scandal," said Dacre. "Until you have recovered your senses I forbid you to come to my house, and, of course, I shall forbid my wife and sister to go to yours. In a few days we shall all have left Ormathwaite."

"I shall follow your wife," cried Frank.

"I advise you not to," said Dacre; "you'll find me there." Then he got over the stile into his own garden and went straight indoors.

Rosamund was not downstairs, so he went upstairs in search of her. He found her in her own room. She had put on a thin white wrapper, and her maid had brought her tea. The woman left the room as Dacre entered it. He sat down on a window-seat opposite his wife.

"I have just told Frank that he is not to come to the house again," he said, going straight to the point.

"That was quite unnecessary," said Rosamund.

She took her husband completely by surprise. Never since their marriage had she swerved from the gentle acquiescence that he supposed she considered dutiful. Even when she had gone against his wishes in the matter of the bicycle she had not taken this tone, and it angered him.

"I have also said that you and Joan will not go to Wangrave at present," he went on.

"What will Joan think?"

"I am afraid she will understand at once."

"There is nothing to understand."

"I remember telling you that there was one thing I would never forgive," said Dacre slowly.

Rosamund felt too angry to speak, too angry to feel sorry or afraid or unhappy. Her anger seemed to burn her like a flame, and drive out all other

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motives and sensations. She turned white to the lips with it, and her eyes dilated.

"You think I am telling you a lie," she said; "you think there is . . ."

He thought she had been carrying on a flirtation with that unspeakably silly boy, and the thought was so humiliating to her, so far from the truth and yet so miserably near the appearance of truth, that she did not know how to frame it in words. She felt that any expression of it must be offensive.

"Your aunt saw what was going on," said Dacre; "she spoke of it. I believe Herr Witt saw it too."

"Did they both try to make mischief with you?"

"And on the night of the concert, when every one had gathered in the hall, I could not find you. I looked in the garden . . ."

"There were Northern Lights in the sky, and Frank wanted me to see them," said Rosamund. "We came back through Joan's room and sat down there a moment."

Dacre's eyes were sad as well as angry now. The explanation sounded so childish and so futile. "There was a book, and Paolo and I were reading it." So Francesca might have spoken. "There was a balcony and a moon and a nightingale." So Juliet. He shifted his position, and stared across the room instead of at his wife's white, angry face.

"What have you and Frank been saying to each other?" she asked.

Dacre turned his eyes on her again in ironical surprise. He made no attempt to answer her.

"You won't tell me?"

"Certainly not."

"Of course, I know he is a silly boy," said Rosa-

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mund, her lip beginning to tremble a little, "but how can I help that?"

"You will not see him again until he is less silly," said Dacre. "He is very changeable . . . as changeable, I think, as you."

"What do you mean by that?"

"How long is it since you cast off Christian Witt?"

"I can't tell you the exact day," said Rosamund. She leant forward a little, and there was still an angry note in her voice, an angry light in her eyes. "It was soon after our marriage," she said.

Before either of them could speak again there was a knock at the door, and Joan opened it. When she saw her brother she drew back, but Dacre called her in.

"I want you," he said; "we can't make our plans without you."

She came further into the room, and sat down beside him on the window-seat.

"Rosamund has a headache," she said; "I think she ought to lie down and not make plans."

"As a matter of fact, they are partly made," said Dacre. "Rosamund is coming with me to Fichtenstadt next week."

He watched his wife's face as he spoke, and saw that she was startled. She looked down; she did not speak; she showed no pleasure, yet against her will her lips broke into a little smile.

"I suppose you don't want me with you?" said Joan.

"We want you very much," said Dacre; "in fact, I am going to ask more of you. Would it break your heart to give up Scotland and stay in Germany or Switzerland with us till the end of the summer?"

"But you are going to America?"

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"I am not sure that I shall now," said Dacre.

Rosamund looked swiftly at her husband. She remembered Frank's threat that he would follow her wherever she went, and she felt sure that Dacre's sudden change of plan had some connection with the infatuated boy.

"You can go to America," she said; "Joan and I are quite able to take care of ourselves."

"I should think so," said Joan.

"We will go to Fichtenstadt on Friday week," said Dacre; "after that we will see."

XXXII

THEY had met Christian Witt by appointment in the Stadt Park, and were having supper out of doors. When the meal was over Christian discovered that the band was a long way off, and that the soft passages did not reach them. He proposed to Joan to go nearer the kiosk. But when Dacre, as host, had paid his bill and followed them with Rosamund, they were nowhere to be seen.

"It was the same story last night," he said.

Rosamund looked wistfully beyond the lights and the crowd towards the quiet depths of the Park.

"I suppose they walk out there amongst the trees," she said.

Dacre, who was looking round for seats, saw two vacant chairs, and pounced on them before he spoke again. He lighted a cigar, while Rosamund watched the people, and wondered how many thousand years had passed since she lived in this town, a little school-

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girl in felt shoes and a shepherd's plaid frock. Now and again they met acquaintances, and the acquaintances invariably showed the most naïve surprise at the change in her. Beate Müller, once Beate Rassmann, had asked her whether it was the English climate or her husband's English money that worked such wonders. Old Luise had laughed and cried with pleasure when she saw her again. It soon became known throughout the town that the great Professor's daughter was here with her Englishman, and though many people were away, Dacre and Rosamund received some invitations. So far, however, every evening had been ingeniously filled up by Christian Witt. He made short work of any one who attempted either to break their party or to join it, and Dacre, for reasons of his own, let him have his way.

"He told us plainly in his letter that he would not be in Fichtenstadt this month," Dacre reminded his wife as he smoked his cigar.

"I believe he ought not to be," said Rosamund. "He has somehow managed to get away for this week. I am not sorry. Are you?"

"How did he know we were here?"

"Joan told him."

"But have they been corresponding with each other?"

"Yes," said Rosamund. She smiled a little, as if some thought amused her, and then she said: "When German writing is very bad Joan cannot read it."

"What does she do?"

"She has to bring it to me."

"I suppose there are no letters now . . . when they are together all day."

"I believe there was one this morning, but I did

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not see it. I expect Joan is getting used to his hand."

"H . . . m," said Dacre discontentedly.

Rosamund moved her chair a little, so that she could better see her husband's profile. This sudden return to her own country had affected her in a manner she had not foreseen. She felt more alive, more completely herself, than she had hitherto done in England. She knew now that she had lived amongst foreigners for nearly a year, and that her pleasant surroundings had been strange and repressive. This was a lighter climate, an easier life. People laughed more, talked more, showed more freely what they felt and desired. It suited her present mood. Shackles fell from her, and she astonished Dacre by her gaiety and her initiative.

"I believe you are happier here than at Ormathwaite," he said jealously; and she smiled and said she loved the storks' nests and the sunshine. Frank's name had not once been spoken by either since they came to Germany.

"Why do we sit here in the dust and the crowd?" she said to-night. "Why don't we walk out there where it is cool and quiet? Or shall we go a little way up that hill, and find a seat amongst the pine-trees? I like looking down at the town when nearly every window has a light in it."

"We can't do that," objected Dacre. "They will come back and expect to find us here."

"They don't want us," said Rosamund mutinously, "any more than we want them."

The band began to play a slow, dreamy waltz, and the lilt of it set her longing.

"Suppose we were in a ballroom?" she said. "Suppose we had never met before, and you came up

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to me and we danced together? I have never danced with you."

"Do you want to?" said Dacre.

"I should love it," said Rosamund.

The waltz went on. The husband and wife listened to it together. To the end of their lives they enshrined the tune of it, and the summer night it recalled. But as the last bars died away, Dacre saw Joan and her musician coming towards them.

"There they are," he said.

Rosamund could not repress a movement of impatience. But Dacre got up and offered his sister his chair. There was no other empty seat near. The two men went off together. The two girls watched them out of sight, and then Joan turned eagerly to her sister-in-law.

"Dear Rose, I am so happy," she said.

"I saw that the moment you appeared," said Rosamund, and their hands met stealthily.

"He spoke to-night."

"Only to-night. I thought . . ."

"Oh, we both knew . . . long since . . . I don't know when . . . ever since we met, we think. But he heard this morning that he is to have the post at Bertholdsruhe in the autumn. It is quite settled. If I had no money we should get on. But we are both anxious about Will. We want you to tell him and persuade him, Rosamund. Do you think you can?"

"He is not an easy person to persuade," said Rosamund doubtfully.

"But you will try?"

"I will try. A week ago I should have said it was no use . . . that I had no influence. . . ."

The moment seemed to sweep down barriers, and the two hands met again.

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"Have things come right?" said Joan.

"They will," said Rosamund; and as the two men approached them she addressed her husband.

"I want to go home," she said; "I am tired. I should like a cab."

"We will walk," said Christian to Joan, and those two set off together.

Dacre looked as if these arrangements were not to his mind, but he said nothing until Rosamund and he were back at the hotel. He lighted the two candles standing ready on the table. Rosamund sat down on the sofa and deliberately pulled off her long gloves.

"I have something to tell you," she said.

"You look as if you thought it good news," said he.

"Christian proposed to Joan to-night. She is very happy."

"I told you we ought not to come to Fichtenstadt."

"That has only hurried it on a little. They were sure of each other when he left Ormathwaite, but he wanted to feel secure about his future before any formal engagement took place. He is to be director of the Opera at Bertholdsruhe. In the musical world it is a great post."

"We don't belong to the musical world," said Dacre of Ormathwaite.

"Joan will love the life," said Rosamund. "She will have music all day long—real music. Of course, she cannot have a menagerie on a flat."

"You talk as if it was a settled thing. I only half like it. He is fickle. A year ago he was in love with you."

"He was never in love with me. He considered me a child, and he was right. I was a child. He loves Joan, and she loves him."

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"You seem delighted."

"I am."

"How will you get on without Joan? You will be more lonely, more unhappy than ever."

"Who told you I was lonely and unhappy?"

"My own eyes. Frank Ilchester!"

"You make me angry when you speak of him."

"Why, Rosamund!" cried Dacre, half surprised, half angered by the girl's unwonted tone.

"You won't hear. You won't see. You still treat me as if I was the child you kindly married."

"The child I married loved another man, and had the honesty to tell me so."

Dacre had not sat down beside Rosamund, and the table in front of the sofa separated them. She got up now and went closer to her husband, for she felt no fear of him to-night. The lilt of the waltz still sang in her soul, and her eyes were shining with an expression he had never seen yet; for though he might often have read love in her eyes, until to-night he had not seen love potent enough to cast out fear.

"Why did you marry me?" she murmured.

"Because I loved you," said Dacre, but his voice did not respond to the tenderness in hers. It was hard.

"Because you pitied me, you mean."

"I mean what I said. I always do."

"Have you been unhappy?"

"When two people make the mistake we did they must suffer for it."

"I have been most unhappy," owned Rosamund, with an alluring little sigh. Then she put both hands on his coat-sleeves.

"Why, Rosamund?" exclaimed Dacre, again

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unable to trust his own senses, unwilling to frighten her off, puzzled, agitated.

"I gathered roses for you, and you would not look at them."

"I saw you give a rose to Christian Witt," said Dacre sternly; "I saw Frank kiss a rose and put it in his pocket-book."

"Frank took his . . . silly boy . . . because I had touched it. . . . You needn't look so savage, Will . . . you're going to beg me to forgive you in a minute. . . . Christian asked for his rose . . . I never gave roses unasked to any man but you . . . I never shall . . . but you would not have them."

Now he had her hands in his, and she began to feel half scared by the commotion of spirit she had stirred in him. She tried to draw her hands away, and found them held faster than before.

"I thought you did not understand," said Dacre. "Are you sure you understand to-night, Rosamund?"

"It is not I who have been slow of understanding," said his wife.

"What do you mean?"

"What I have meant a thousand times . . . when I dressed myself up and came into your room uninvited . . . when I asked you to stay in my room and see the moon rise . . . when I brought you the roses of the ode. . . . I have been brazen . . . how am I ever to forget it?"

"Frank said I neglected you, made you miserable."

"So you did. You see, it began so long ago . . . before ever we got to Ormathwaite I knew it was you . . . you and no other . . . and I used to watch you . . . and try to please you. . . . I dressed for you . . . spoke and thought for you . . . dreamed of you . . . oh! I've eaten my heart out!"

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"But, my dear child, why didn't you come and tell me so?"

"I did—twenty times a day."

"Not as you have told me to-night . . . so that I could understand."

"How could I? My cheeks are burning now. I don't suppose I shall ever be able to look you in the face again. Besides, you froze me. England froze me. My own country has loosed my tongue."

Rosamund threw back her head a little so that she could see her husband's face, for he had drawn her close to him now.

"It has not loosed yours," she declared. "What have you said to encourage me?"

His lips met hers before he spoke.

"I ask you to forgive me," he said at length.

They walked slowly towards the open window, and stood there together looking at the sky.

"Shall you go to America now?" said Rosamund, after a time.

"If you will come with me," said Dacre.

"Then Christian Witt will get his own way. He wants Joan to marry him in a fortnight."

"I had quite forgotten Christian Witt," said Dacre.

"I think I will just steal across to Joan's room and tell her you consent," said Rosamund guilefully. "It will make her so happy."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Dacre; "I don't consent. I don't wish it."

"Well, you needn't consent, you know. It isn't necessary. But you might let me tell her you're not furious."

"Furious is not the right word."

"Of course not. How could it be to-night, when we are so happy?"

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"Why can't she marry in her own country?"

"It runs in the family . . . not to . . . I suppose."

"Rosamund!"

"Send her a nice message. No. Come with me. She will be expecting us."

"Did she ask you to tell me, then?"

"Yes; and I said you were a difficult man to persuade."

"So I am."

"Not to-night. I've come into my kingdom, and I'm going to reign there. You know you can deny me nothing."

"I'm afraid you know it too," said Dacre, as he followed his wife to Joan's room.

"It's all right, Joan," said Rosamund—"everything is all right."

Joan saw from the radiance in their faces that it was not only her own deep joy they were celebrating, and her brother's kiss told her more than the few words did in which he gave his consent to her marriage.

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XXXIII

THE next morning Christian came round to the hotel and asked for Dacre. He was taken upstairs, and found the Englishman alone in a private sitting-room. The two men shook hands, and Dacre observed that the German had dressed himself with unusual care, and that he looked both happy and solemn.

"Perhaps you know already what I have to say," he began at once.

"I suppose I do," admitted Dacre.

There were two easy-chairs near an open window, and the two men took them. The window looked on the Kaiser Strasse, but at that hour of the morning there was not much traffic there.

"Now that I have seen your home I know that it is not much of a marriage for your sister," said Christian.

"I cannot give her a park and a castle."

Dacre could not help smiling. The German was generally sure of himself, pleased with his prospects, and accustomed to recognition of his great ability. This air of apology sat strangely on him.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you that the marriage does not meet with my approval," said Dacre.

"I could not expect it," said Christian.

"I am not thinking so much of the money as of the other disadvantages."

"I know of no other disadvantages," said Christian. "Of course, that is a serious one from your point of view. From my point of view I am extremely well off. My income at Bertholdsruhe will be five hundred a year, and my father left me a thousand pounds. I

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shall insure my life, and every year we shall save something. Besides, I shall not be content with Bertholdsruhe for ever. It is a stepping-stone to something more important still."

"That is all quite satisfactory," said Dacre, looking at his future brother-in-law with a glance of reflective surprise that Christian did not understand yet. "But if Joan marries you she will have to live in Germany."

"She could not live in a better country."

"I will speak plainly," said Dacre; "I distrust the artistic temperament: it is unstable. What it loves one day it casts aside the next."

"That is not my nature," said Christian simply. "Until I saw your sister I had not seen the woman I wished to make my wife. We are a faithful people, neither light nor fickle."

"But I have heard stories . . . you are run after by all sorts of silly women."

"When I have a wife they will cease to run . . . I hope. Besides, at Bertholdsruhe I need not give many lessons . . . a few perhaps . . . to add to our income."

"Has Joan said anything to you of her own income?"

"Nothing at all. I did not know she had one."

"But you knew that I had money."

"It is your English way, I believe, to give the son everything and the daughters nothing. I will not pretend that I approve of it. I am glad to hear Joan has a little money. She has been used to great comfort, and she tells me she is the worst housekeeper in the world. It costs money to be a bad housekeeper; but if it makes her happy . . . in Germany a man can get a meal out of doors at a pinch."

Dacre laughed, and offered Christian a cigar. He

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felt the personal charm of the man, he believed in his worth, and he had a high opinion of his powers. He knew that Joan's world would think the marriage an odd one, though it would have applauded her marriage with Frank Ilchester. As Dacre lighted his own cigar he made up his mind that, for once, the world would be in the wrong.

"Joan's money will be settled on her and her children in the English way," he said. "My father left her fifty thousand pounds."

"Pounds sterling! Fifty thousand pounds sterling!"

"All these years she has spent nothing much. She has lived at Ormathwaite. I suppose it has doubled itself."

"I had no idea of this when I asked her to marry me yesterday," said Christian. "She said nothing. I thought perhaps you would give her a hundred, or even two hundred, a year. With such a fortune she might marry a prince in this country."

"Well," said Dacre. "I hope you will make her happy."

"Do you mean that you consent . . . without any fuss? But I see it myself more than ever: it is a poor marriage for her."

"I am not so sure of that," said Dacre, offering his future brother-in-law his hand. "I confess that at first I only half liked it."

"I only half like it now," growled Christian. "I have no desire . . . what is your English expression . . . to hang up my hat in my wife's hall."

"But as long as you go on with your music . . ."

"My music is me. It will stop when I stop," said Christian: and then their discussion came to an end. Rosamund and Joan appeared.

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"Have you finished?" said Rosamund; "we want you to come out with us."

The two men had risen, and Christian went with Joan to the sofa at the other end of the room, and sat down there beside her.

"Your brother has just been telling me how rich you are," he said discontentedly. "Why did you hide it from me?"

"I didn't hide it," said Joan; "I didn't think of it. I am not *rich*. What nonsense! We shall just get along."

"You must be a *very* bad housekeeper," said Christian, and the idea seemed to afford him consolation.

"Look! look!" cried Rosamund, who had sat down opposite her husband; "there is Aunt Betty! What is she doing here? She ought to be at Obermatt."

"She has seen you," said Dacre. "You attracted her attention. She is coming into the hotel."

"Well," said Rosamund, "we have some news for her."

A moment later Betty knocked at the door and came into the room.

"So you have come to Fichtenstadt after all," she said, rustling straight up to her niece, without seeing the two people at the further end of the room.

"Is Mr. Ilchester here as well?"

"We are doing without him," said Dacre, giving up his easy-chair to her.

"Quite right. But how long will that last?"

"How is it you are here, Aunt Betty?" asked Rosamund. "I thought you were to be at Obermatt for weeks."

Before Betty could reply, Joan came towards the

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window, followed by Christian Witt. The girl was tranquil and smiling; the man looked both embarrassed and determined.

"Will you wish us joy, Frau Elsler?" he said. "We are betrothed." He turned to Dacre without seeming to observe Betty's change of countenance, and said: "You consent, do you not? I may make it public?"

Betty looked from one to the other, and both her smile and her words were two-edged when she spoke.

"I wish you both joy," she said; "I think you both show courage."

"Why courage?" said Christian.

Betty gave her accustomed little shrug and turned to Joan.

"You have sung to him," she said; "are you prepared to cook for him? He will expect it."

"We shall take each other for better, for worse," said Joan placidly.

"When are you going to be married? You will want a flat, I suppose? I will let you mine if you like."

"We shall live in Bertholdsruhe," said Christian.

"Are you called there, then?"

"It is practically settled, but it will not be announced till next week."

"Why do you want to let your flat, Aunt Betty?" said Rosamund.

"Because Major Vollmar lives at Dresden."

"Is he at Obermatt again this summer?"

"Yes. He proposes whenever he sees me. That is why I came away."

"But . . ."

Betty had recovered her self-possession and her indifferent amiability.

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"I shall go back to-morrow," she said. "He will meet me at the station, and we shall settle it as we walk up the hill. I could not stand Fichtenstadt without Christian. It is the dullest hole."

Rosamund looked quite concerned.

"I hope you will be happy, Aunt Betty," she said.

Betty said she thought she ought to be, as Major Vollmar had considerable private means already, and the expectation of more when a bachelor uncle died. Then she got up to go, and said that she hoped both Rosamund and Joan would come to her wedding.

"Which of us will be married first, I wonder?" she said to Christian.

"I should like to be married in a fortnight," said he.

"That is out of the question," said Dacre; "there are business matters to arrange that will take time. I know what lawyers are: and there is all the German red-tape besides. It will take weeks to convince your Jacks-in-office that Joan is not married already. You must wait till after Rosamund and I get back from America; Joan is going to Scotland. We settled it more or less this morning."

"Rosamund going to America . . . with you," said Betty, looking as much surprised as she felt. "I am delighted to hear it. But what a new departure!"

"When shall you be back from America?" asked Christian.

"End of September probably."

"It will seem like a century," he complained.

"You are always so impatient," said Betty. "I shall make Major Vollmar wait till October, so I hope you will all four come to my wedding."

"We shall be in Italy," said Christian.

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"We shall be at home," said Dacre.

"You ought to come to Joan's wedding at Ormathwaite," said Rosamund.

"I should like to hear Mr. Sidmouth play Christian's wedding march," said Betty; and though it was explained to her that this would not be Mr. Sidmouth's office, she went away protesting that she would cross the Channel in October on purpose to hear him.

"I can't make up my mind," said Rosamund to her husband. "Does Aunt Betty care for Christian? Is she grieved that he is going to marry Joan?"

"She took it better than I expected," said Dacre.

"Will she really marry Major Vollmar?"

"Why not?"

"She doesn't care a bit for him."

"Well," said Dacre, "you married in that way yourself."

"Oh!" cried Rosamund; and she held up some roses that he had given her that morning, and looked at them instead of at him. She was their colour as he took them out of her hands.

"When we get home," he said, "I will show you the one you gave me years ago at Christmas. I kept it."

"Home," she echoed. "I never thought of Ormathwaite as home before."

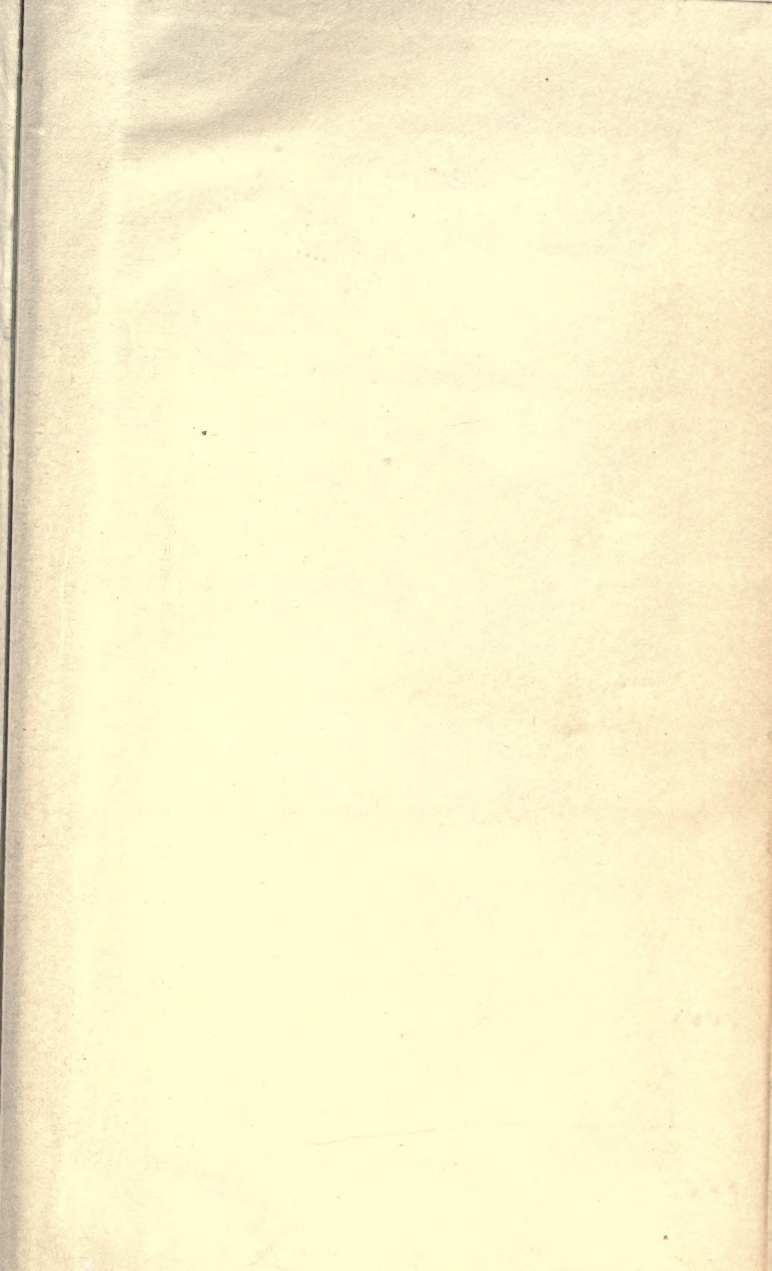
"But you do now?"

"Sapperlot," said Christian, opening the door of the sitting-room and suddenly shutting it again. "Those two have always something important to say to each other, it seems . . . since yesterday. I do not know what has happened. Do you?"

"I guess," said Joan.

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